

COLLINS GUIDE TO

Letter Writing

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*All names and addresses appearing in this book are fictitious,
and any resemblance to any person is entirely accidental.*

• **PART ONE** •

1

Anyone can write

THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU TO WRITE BETTER letters at work and at home. It will open your eyes to the effects that well-written letters can create, and it will show you exactly how to produce these effects.

It is a book about communication: about the vital two-way flow between people that goes on every day of our lives. It deals with words and the way they can be put together on paper. There are words which can create magical effects; words which, married in one startling sentence, can evoke just the response you want. In these pages you will learn how to use them.

This book can guide you on to the quick, straight road to success in business, putting ideas into your head, saving you time and energy, giving you an advantage over others; and in your private life it can change letter writing from a chore to a joy.

Let's take a look at the average business letter. It is verbose and stereotyped. Since not one person in ten

has had any worth-while training in letter writing, this is hardly surprising. Lacking confidence, each letter writer simply imitates the person who held the job before him. His letters are full of hackneyed phrases. They put a strain on the reader, wasting his time with unnecessary expressions, boring him with outworn phrases. Or else they are so short that, instead of being lucid, they appear discourteous, and produce the opposite effect of what was intended. The clearest letter ever written can sometimes leave a reader unmoved, even angry!

· *TELL-TALE MISTAKES* ·

Many letters are full of tell-tale mistakes—slips of grammar, spelling or punctuation which give a totally wrong impression of the writer's true ability and a detrimental image of the company he works for.

Some letters offend the established techniques of layout. Others may be quite well written, but miss out because of ignorance about the correct form of address.

In our private correspondence we face a different set of problems. Our letters here fall into two categories: those we write as private individuals to companies and officials, and those we exchange with our friends.

In the first group we must exercise great care. Frequently we may be committing ourselves to a contract—the purchase of a house, or booking our next summer holiday. So much may be at stake. Everyone can profit from advice here.

In the second group we want to convey the kind of

person we are; to be able to write quickly and easily with understanding, warmth and humour so that our true character and personality come across. Some of us seem to have a gift for this facility in writing. For most, however, to write a letter, even to a close friend, is an unwelcome task. We have become lazy. With easier travel, with the telephone always at hand, we have lost this fine art and we are impoverished by the loss.

· *DESIGN FOR THINKING* ·

In this book you will not find a lengthy catalogue of standard letters written for you in the chapters dealing with private correspondence. The book's aim is not to hand you ready-made letters that fit you about as attractively as someone else's clothes. This book is intended to make you think, to develop your imagination and show you how to put your thoughts and ideas on paper.

To achieve this you will have to think a great deal about the other person: the reader. This is the meaning of the two-way flow. Constantly you must think in the terms of the reader, for he is obviously the most important person in the piece. It is for him that you are using your time, your paper and your postage stamps. Yet too often we forget this other person. He is not sitting opposite us. He is not with us in time. He cannot protest until long after we have had our say.

This is the ever-present danger in writing letters. When the words are put down and the letter has been

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despatched, the damage may have been done, and it may be days before we learn the effect, if we ever do so.

In contrast the writer of a well-written letter has, in effect, a captive audience. If the opening sentence interests him, talks his language, he will read on and he will probably act in the way you want. Unlike a personal interview, you have plenty of time to state your case, and you can do so without interruption. The written word is a powerful force, for good or bad.

· FORGET THE MYSTIQUE ·

In this book we are going to destroy many misconceptions—tear down many barriers which have no need to exist. We are going to prove to you that just about anyone can write. There is no mystique about writing. Certainly, some people will always be able to write better than others, but anyone who absorbs the teachings here will be able to express himself clearly and concisely in good English and create the effect in the reader which he desires.

We shall start from the beginning—right inside your head where the thoughts occur long before you put pen to paper, type or dictate. Here we shall see the importance of clear thinking and the bearing it has on the letters you write.

From there we shall learn the value of style, its individuality and the part it plays in achieving effect. We shall learn how you can add colour to heighten interest, the tricks which help even though they may not show.

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Next we shall add to your vocabulary. Most of us use a mere fraction of the words we could command. English is the richest of languages. There is always a word to convey the *exact* meaning, the one word from a host of alternatives. At this stage we shall gain command of the words which rivet attention, trigger action, create a lasting effect. And we shall distinguish words and phrases to avoid clichés and hackneyed, overworked expressions.

From this point we must turn to the structure of our language itself: its grammar. This is a word to send shivers through many of us. It has unpleasant associations with school, of long dull lessons taking sentences apart and putting them together again. There will be none of that here. We shall deal with grammar briskly, in the business-like way it deserves.

Punctuation is important. It can change the meaning of a sentence completely, and its haphazard use can ruin a good letter. All doubts on punctuation will be removed for ever.

SPELLING MADE EASIER ·

Some people can spell without effort: for others it is a Herculean task. Those who experience difficulty need have no qualms about their intelligence, however, for great writers throughout history have shared their trouble. Although standard spelling is a comparatively modern idea, it is here to stay, and in letter writing we must conform to it. There will be much here to lighten the load of those who have spelling difficulties.

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There are other tell-tale slips besides spelling to watch for—the grammatical errors that so easily spoil an otherwise well-written letter. We shall soon be dealing with these.

In the chapters on writing business letters we shall explore the psychology of writing and understand the methods which can be employed to win results; learn how to deal with people and get them thinking our way.

Routine letters will be given, dealing with day-to-day business matters, but the most interesting section here is that which deals with sales letters. It is in this area that the most dramatic results can be obtained, and you will find plenty of valuable advice and a host of examples.

• APPLYING FOR A JOB •

Turning from straight business letters, we then turn to the region where business and private life merge. Almost everyone at some stage has to write a letter of application for a job. It is one of the most difficult tasks that we ever have to face—and at the same time one of the most important. Some advertisements pull in hundreds of replies. The company advertising the position cannot possibly interview everyone and so only those applicants whose letters show promise are invited to attend an interview. Never was it clearer that the letter of application should set the right tone, be absolutely flawless and encourage the reader to take the desired action. In this part of the book you will get all the help you deserve.

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The chapters on your private correspondence will, as indicated, cover the letters you have to write to people in business and the professions, as well as helping you to regain the joy of writing to friends and relatives—expressing yourself more fully as you do so.

Finally, there is a list of the standard forms of address which you use in writing to people in different walks of life.

This then is the exciting prospect before you—a complete course of letter writing in one compact book. You will begin to improve almost at once and you will wonder how you managed to limp along unaided for so long. By the time you have mastered the whole book you will be writing letters in a fraction of the time you did before, enjoying it as you do so, and achieving your aims. This you will do, consciously at first, and then, after practice and the gain in confidence which follows practice, quite automatically.

So let's turn now to the next chapter and see how to marshal your thoughts and set them down in your own style.

2

Develop a style

YOU ARE AN INDIVIDUAL. YOU HAVE A character and a personality which distinguish you from everyone else. Your friends can recognise you from the other end of the street; they know your voice on the telephone instantly. There are special things about you that find their way into your day-to-day communications with others. Let this individuality show in your letters too.

In all but the most formal and routine of business and personal letters, this precious quality can enhance their effectiveness. In a competitive world it is to your very real advantage that your character and personality should be appreciated as far and wide as possible.

Unfortunately, a blank sheet of paper can be a frightening thing. It is there, staring at you, defying you to fill it with intelligence and imagination. The person to whom you are writing is far away. He cannot prompt you, encourage you, tell you how to

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begin. Even the formal "Dear So-and-So," is only a temporary help. You still have to concoct that opening sentence.

At work, the blank sheet of paper is replaced by an even more terrifying object—the waiting secretary. There she is with pencil poised and her mind tuned in to you. There you sit like a performer without lines. The curtain is up and you do not know your part.

• CLEAR THINKING •

Anyone can write, but only if he first marshals his thoughts. In a business letter this is imperative; in private correspondence it is a wonderful help to the writer and a blessing to the reader.

In order to think clearly about what you are going to write, there is a short routine which you can follow and so put yourself in the right frame of mind. It is no good beginning a letter in a state of agitation with your mind half on other things. You must relax. You must put conflicting thoughts out of your head. If your arms and legs and breathing are all tensed up, you are not putting all your energy and concentration into your letter. They are being wasted in needless tension.

So—empty your mind of extraneous thoughts, relax, and start to think about the person who is going to receive this letter. Call to mind what kind of a person he is. Think hard about him.

Then think about what you plan to say. If there are a number of points to make, arrange them in some sort of order. By keeping the reader in mind, you will

formulate your approach so that it will achieve the best effect. You will see which point you should present first.

As you do this, observe your thoughts. Study them in a detached way and keep them under control. Don't let them take over. If any irrelevant ones come into your head, ignore them.

Keep relaxed, keep the reader in mind, relate your thoughts to him and express only the appropriate ones.

This is the secret of clear thinking as applied to letter writing. It need not take long. At first the process may take a few minutes, but as you practise this form of thought control it will take less and less time. Eventually the whole process need take, on average, only a matter of seconds.

Once you start writing, retain these same basic essentials. Stay relaxed. Keep the reality of the reader in mind. Don't be side-stepped from the purpose of your letter.

In business you will frequently be writing to someone you have never met. This makes no difference. You know the job he has to do, the difficulties he faces, the requirements that will help him. He is human like yourself and this is enough.

If you are writing a sales letter which will be printed and sent to hundreds or thousands of readers, the rule still applies. In this case you visualise the average reader, the kind of person who is most typical of the class of people you aim to reach. We shall discuss this more in the chapter on sales letters.

· PITCHING IT RIGHT ·

Having reasoned what you want to write, and what would be best left out, make sure that you are pitching it right for the reader—putting it in a way that will make him want to read it.

If he is a very busy person, are you being too long-winded? On the other hand, if what you have to say is likely to meet with opposition, have you been too abrupt? By keeping yourself detached from your thoughts—a little outside them—you will be in a far better position to consider this all important person, the reader. If you are wrapped up with considerations about yourself, instead of him, your letter will be far less effective. The importance of this fundamental approach cannot be stressed too strongly.

From this position you can use tact, courtesy, wit, humour, persuasion—and even force—to best advantage.

Of all these, tact is perhaps the most important. Tact is simply a part of pitching your letter right for the reader. It is a way of showing consideration for his feelings, of anticipating his objections, of giving him the chance to give in to you without loss of face.

You can say almost anything in two ways. One way will give unnecessary offence; the other will put the point across without malice. Tact will help you to point out where a person has gone wrong without hurting. Tact will enable you to ask for help without prostrating yourself. Tact will help you to ask for an increase in salary—and receive it! It is easy to use

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tact when you make a point of studying your reader.

By now that blank sheet of paper or the waiting secretary should hold few fears for you. A short time in relaxed thought, with your mind on the reader, will equip you to plunge into the letter with confidence.

• USE YOUR IMAGINATION •

In certain kinds of letters—personal ones and sales letters—you can use your imagination to the full. You can escape from hackneyed phrases almost completely, indulge in flights of fancy, entertain your reader and let your character and personality come through.

Here the basic rule of contemporary writing comes into play. It is: write as you speak. There is no room today for flowery prose, for long, involved sentences and complicated forms of expression. People today are accustomed to the crisp, concise style of the newspaper and news commentator. They are used to realism.

Your letters will carry greater sincerity if you write in the same crisp, clear way. Think about this a moment and you will realise that this is how you speak. You express yourself in short simple sentences when you talk because this is the most effective way of conveying your thoughts. Certainly you vary your style for each listener—probably unconsciously—but the style stays simple.

This then is the way to write! Keep your sentences short, avoiding involved constructions. Keep your words short, avoiding out-of-date, unnecessarily long or obscure words. Then your style of writing will never stand in the way of the thoughts you are ex-

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pressing. Instead of obtruding, it will be a well-oiled vehicle to convey them directly and swiftly.

But isn't this going to lead to standardisation and dullness?

Certainly not! There is infinite scope for you to develop your own style within this framework, and there need never be any excuse for dullness except in the purely formal business or personal letter where imagination obviously has no place. With your mind relaxed but tuned in to the reader, you can let your imagination roam, bring your sense of humour to bear, indulge in anecdote, tease and intrigue to your heart's content. By doing this you will bring your letters to life. The reader will feel that he is hearing from a real person. In a business letter its effectiveness will be multiplied; in a personal letter you will be sealing something of yourself inside the envelope.

• COLOUR YOUR STYLE •

Within the framework of simplicity and directness there is still scope for you to add colour to your writing. You can choose the less obvious of two appropriate words: write "to rivet attention" instead of "to gain attention" or "a matchless bargain" instead of merely "a good bargain".

Be careful in doing so, however, not to change the sense. The English language is the most colourful of all languages; it abounds in synonyms but each fresh word has a different shade of meaning, however slight.

Consider the following synonyms for "nice":

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Savoury, tasty, palatable, dainty, delectable, toothsome, appetising, delicate, delicious, exquisite, rich, luscious, pleasant, agreeable, delightful; Discriminating, discriminative, critical, distinctive; Particular, meticulous, delicate; Good, excellent, superior, fine; Refreshing, cordial, genial, sweet; Fastidious, exacting, finicky, squeamish, strait-laced, prudish, prim, scrupulous, hypercritical, discerning, perspicacious; Punctilious, correct, respectable, gentlemanlike;

And so on . . .

In any one sentence, only one of the foregoing words would be the perfect word to use. In another sentence a different word could be more apt. "Nice" has been chosen for this example because it is one of the most over-worked words in the English language and so has lost its full meaning.

One of the best devices for adding colour is the simile. In this, two things or actions are likened to each other for clearness or emphasis. The connecting words are usually "like" or "as", e.g.

The joy left his face like a cloud passing across the sun.

Quivering like a squirrel's tail.

Coloured as if brushed by a rainbow.

As dark as a dungeon.

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Another valuable aid to style is the metaphor. In this device the resemblance is not stated, merely implied. A metaphor is like a compressed simile, e.g.

His ambition kept him going as a spur urges a horse forward,

becomes:

His ambition *spurred* him on.

Other examples of colourful metaphors are:

Successful letter writing is the *key to success*.

I have *pared* unnecessary correspondence to the minimum.

The *millstone* of my misfortunes.

Many metaphors have become so much a part of everyday speech that they are no longer recognisable:

A race against time; a blind-alley job; on the spur of the moment; best foot forward; love is blind.

As a general rule, these hackneyed expressions should be avoided in letters.

Be careful not to mix your metaphors. This happens when you begin with one thing or action and finish with another which does not belong to it. Such as:

We must win the battle of rising costs even though the tide is against us.

Here the idea of the tide is incompatible with that of a battlefield. The effect is absurd. You will not make a slip like this if you have practised thinking clearly.

• CLEAR WRITING •

Important though it is to add colour to your writing, perfect clarity is the basis of good style. It comes from clear thinking. It is a steady progression from one point to another, paragraph by paragraph.

Within your paragraphs your sentences should be short and simple. They should not all be the same length, neither all too long nor all too short. Vary them. Longer sentences slow the reader down; shorter ones speed him up. All this adds interest. At first it is something you will have to strive for consciously; later you will achieve it without thinking.

Within your sentences choose your words carefully. At all times keep clarity in mind as your aim. Fowler puts it succinctly when he says:

- Prefer the familiar word to the far fetched.
- Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.
- Prefer the single word to the circumlocution.
- Prefer the short word to the long.
- Prefer the Saxon word to the Roman.

Note that he says *prefer*. These are not hard and fast rules which must not be broken; they are only a general guide. Thus, you may always substitute the far-fetched word for the familiar when the effect created is exciting and in keeping, where it lifts the writing from dullness.

Good style at first will call for watchfulness and practice. Later it will come naturally.

3

Add to your word armoury

IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE some half a million words in the English language, yet most people use only a few thousand, and many are limited to a few hundred.

If you want to check your word rating—how many you know—try this simple test. Rule two columns on a piece of paper. Open a dictionary at any page and start reading. In one column write down the words you use and understand. In the other write down those you don't use and don't understand.

Continue until you have listed a total of 500 words. Then add up the words you use and understand, and multiply this total by 500. The answer you get will be very roughly the total number of words you normally use out of the half million available.

This answer is your word rating. If your total is 5,000 you are only one per cent efficient and you are poorly armed.

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If your total is 50,000 you are ten per cent efficient but even so you are above average.

If your total is 100,000 you are twenty per cent efficient and have a supreme advantage over others.

Yet how pathetic these totals appear in contrast to the potential. How much better your letters would be if you could double your word rating.

This in fact you can achieve. By regular study, observation and practice you can equip yourself with an extensive vocabulary.

• YOUR TWO VOCABULARIES •

Your vocabulary consists of the words you can summon to your command. In fact you have not one vocabulary but two. They are: your *receptive vocabulary* and your *active vocabulary*.

Your receptive vocabulary is composed of the number of words you understand, whether you use them or not. Your active vocabulary comprises the words you actually use.

There is usually a considerable gap between the two. Your aim should be to reduce this gap to the minimum.

The first step towards increasing your active vocabulary has already been described: by adding colour to your style you will automatically tend to use words which you have not used hitherto.

The second step is to make a practice of looking up in the dictionary the exact meaning and origin of any word which you rarely use or which is unknown to you. Why bother about the origin? An interest in words will help to extend your knowledge of them. The

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origin of words is fascinating and tells you a great deal about them. This knowledge helps you to spell them and fixes their meaning permanently in your mind.

The best plan is to keep a notebook handy and enter in it new words as you come across them—in conversation, in reading other people's letters or in your general reading.

The third step is to get yourself a book of synonyms and antonyms or a thesaurus. You can read this as you would any book—on a bus or train journey or over lunch. You will become fascinated at the richness of our language and the variety of ways there are for expressing your thoughts.

However it is not much use merely noting the colourful or forceful words used by others if you are not going to use them yourself. Take them out of storage and *force* yourself to use them. Pause before you use any over-worked, hackneyed word and think whether you could replace it by a less obvious one.

Consider this letter.

Dear Paul,

May I be one of the first to congratulate you? Last night you gave a good performance which I would have been most disappointed to have missed. Now I am convinced that you did right in choosing a musical career and I take back in full any early misgivings I might have shown. I shall be watching your career with keen and affectionate interest.

Sincerely,

John

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This is a well-composed letter which just misses because of the inadequacy of one key word. Paul's performance deserved a stronger, more colourful word than *good*. The whole point of the letter hinges on the quality of his performance.

Consider these alternatives.

A wonderful performance
A flawless performance
A perfect performance
An excellent performance
A brilliant performance
A scintillating performance
An exciting performance.

Each of the words replacing *good* has a different quality, imparts a different "colour" to it and is either more or less forceful.

Now look at this business letter.

Dear Mr. Jenkins,

Thank you for your letter of January 16th. You have certainly removed one anxiety by promising firm delivery at the end of the month, but I am concerned to learn of the price increase shown by the figures you have quoted. Would you be good enough to explain whether this is accidental or intentional.

Yours sincerely,

Terence Stewart
Export Manager

This is a pointed letter calculated to set Mr. Jenkins

WORD ARMOURY

thinking and probably acting smartly. Perhaps it was strong enough for the occasion, but Mr. Stewart could have substantially changed the tone of the letter by writing, instead of *I am concerned*:

I am surprised
I am disturbed
I am puzzled
I am shocked

Basically the letter is unchanged, but the style of it is altered, and with it the whole tone of the letter, by each of the alternatives listed.

As you practise the recommendations in this chapter you will find that alternatives spring readily to mind whenever you write a letter.

4

Hackneyed expressions

THERE IS LITTLE EXCUSE FOR USING HACKNEYED expressions in our everyday speech and none at all for using them in either our personal letters or business correspondence. They are signs of a lazy, unimaginative mind and they rob any letter of its freshness and individuality. Use these expressions, and your letters cease to convey your character and personality to the reader.

How can you recognise these worn-out expressions and clichés?

Simply listen and watch for them. They are the neat little bundles of words, ready-made for the occasion, which pop out as mechanically as a package from a vending machine. But you are not a machine! You are an original human being and there is no other one on earth quite like you. You would not be content to wear someone else's clothing, so be equally unwilling to accept other people's expressions!

HACKNEYED EXPRESSIONS

Clichés are second-hand cleverness; jokes that have ceased to be funny, and slogans that have lost their punch.

Here are some examples of outworn expressions and clichés.

Last but not least
Contents duly noted
As a matter of fact
In this day and age
Be that as it may
As quick as lightning
Too bright to last
More in it than meets the eye
Enough is as good as a feast
When all is said and done
Just the job
Lock, stock, and barrel
You never can tell
Never a dull moment
In a manner of speaking
Hold your horses
Dead as the dodo
Your esteemed order
I am happy to state
As clean as a whistle
Best foot forward
First and foremost
I hope you are quite well
In the pink
As it leaves me at present

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As broad as it is long
So far so good
Till the cows come home
If you know what I mean
What I mean to say is
Easy come, easy go
As I always say
Penny wise, pound foolish
I know it like the back of my hand
Still waters run deep
Many hands make light work
More haste less speed
A rod for your own back
In for a penny, in for a pound
All in the day's work

This list is a mere fraction of all the second-hand expressions in common currency. There are few occasions today where any of them is justified.

Some are the kind of expressions only to be found in personal correspondence; others are typical of business jargon.

Once all business letters had to conform to this jargon. A special language was being created, ugly, roundabout and quite unlike the language of everyday use. The beautiful English language was being murdered, quite unnecessarily, in the interests of commerce.

Fortunately the forces of good came to the rescue and sanity returned to business correspondence. Today it is not necessary to say "We are in receipt

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of yours of the 18th inst". More simply we say "Thank you for your letter of March 18th". (Or whatever the current month happens to be.)

Let's take a look at a few worn-out business expressions that still persist.

In due course (after the usual dillydallying)
As you know (if not I'm stupid, you mean?)
I wish to state (then why not do so?)
Your letter of recent date (you mean my recent letter)
Due to the fact that (because)
Hereafter and henceforth (I'm repeating myself)
I have before me your letter (obviously)
I wish to thank you (why not just do it?)
I beg to inform you (mind you don't fall over)
I am happy to state (take that silly grin off your face)
This is to inform you (how pompous can you get?)

How many of these and similar expressions do you come across in your business correspondence? Do you use any of them yourself? None of them can add anything to a letter which will improve it. None of them helps to make a letter clearer. If you ever catch yourself using such expressions, make a vow to cleanse your writing of them in the future.

• HOW TO AVOID CLICHES •

If you discard clichés and other hackneyed expressions, how are you going to fill the vacuum so created?

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The answer is simply to think all the time!

Whenever you use one of these expressions you have stopped thinking creatively, and have let someone else do the thinking for you. Remember the exercise in concentration: empty your mind of extraneous thoughts and concentrate on your reader. Full awareness all the time you are writing is the first step to take.

Next, be sincere. You may sound insincere if you use borrowed expressions, so aim to be both original and direct, and let your *real* self come through.

Here is a letter written entirely in worn-out expressions.

Dear Mabel,

I hope you are quite well. As a matter of fact I am feeling down in the dumps and feeling sorry for myself in a manner of speaking. It never rains but it pours! But be that as it may, I must put my best foot forward, as they say, and press on regardless.

What I mean to say is, you're a long time dead so you might as well make the most of what you've got. Mustn't grumble!

How is the world treating you? Is George still driving you up the wall? It's high time he pulled his socks up and learned to fend for himself, I say.

I'd be as pleased as punch if you'd drop in when you're passing and have a chinwag.

So long for now,

Yours,

Betty

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Far fetched? Not as improbable as you would think! Many people have come to rely almost entirely on second-hand expressions, and the more significant the content of the letter, the more they resort to them.

In this letter we see a woman who is obviously very unhappy, but trying to be cheerful, and appealing to her friend to come round and talk to her. Here is a different letter conveying these feelings, written with originality and with the friend more in mind.

Dear Mabel,

Today I felt I just had to write to you. I have been miserable and quite stupidly full of self-pity all day so that I just had to share the feeling with someone.

I don't want you to worry about me because I know that I can cope. I'm really very lucky to have too much to do! It is a way of escaping.

I think of you often and wonder how you are. Is George learning to be more independent? I know how his laziness upsets you.

It would be wonderful if you could come over soon. Your company is the best tonic I know.

Yours,

Betty

This letter reads naturally, but don't be too easily deceived. The writer thought carefully before beginning it, decided definitely what she wanted to convey, and then set down her thoughts logically, feelingly, and with her friend very much in mind. This is the way to avoid the pitfall of overworked expressions in any correspondence.

5

Write it correctly

WE COMMUNICATE OUR THOUGHTS CHIEFLY by the use of words, either spoken or written. To be sure that the person or people with whom we are communicating gets the sense of our thoughts we must choose our words carefully and arrange them correctly. This arranging of words so that they have the right relationship with each other is the province of grammar.

You cannot write a good letter if your grammar is faulty. Firstly the relationship of your words will most probably be faulty and so the sense will not come over as you intended. Secondly your errors will suggest to the reader that your education and intelligence are suspect. This second point is unfortunate but true. Plenty of people are well educated in the sense that they have an excellent general knowledge and they know what life is about, but because grammar was put over to them badly at school, they shied away from it and

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failed to appreciate how very important it is. Their intelligence may be high, but it does not come through to the person reading their letters because of the barrier of faulty grammar.

Our job in this important chapter is to tear down that barrier once and for all. Most of grammar is logical and all of it is easy to understand with a little study and practice.

In this chapter we shall deal with things like sentence construction, parts of speech, cases and tenses so that tell-tale grammatical errors needn't happen any more.

In Chapter 6 we shall see how our sentences should be punctuated and arranged into paragraphs so that they get over to the reader as clearly and vividly as possible.

• WHAT MAKES A SENTENCE •

A sentence is a complete thought expressed in a group of words. It may be short and simple, or long and complex, but it always contains two essentials, namely the SUBJECT and the PREDICATE.

Don't be frightened of these abstract words—they are easy to explain in concrete terms.

The SUBJECT is the word (or words) which stands for the person or thing about which something is being said. The PREDICATE is the part of the sentence which says something about the subject.

In the sentence, "My brother works in London," the subject is *My brother* and the rest of the sentence is the predicate. Sometimes the subject may be long and involved and the predicate short, e.g.

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The train, which had rattled incessantly throughout the night, halted.

Here the predicate is the one word *halted* and the rest of the sentence forms the subject. In the following sentence the balance is redressed.

The church is on the corner of the street opposite the town hall and the bridge across the river.

The subject is *The church* and the rest of the sentence forms the predicate.

Sometimes the subject is left out of a sentence because it is understood and there is no need to state it, as in "Stop!" or "Keep on trying". Here the unstated subject is *You*, i.e. "You stop!" and "You keep on trying". Nevertheless each is a sentence because it expresses a complete thought.

A common mistake is to assume that a group of words is a sentence when it has no predicate:

The elderly man, who plods down the road each evening for his pint of bitter.

Office machinery, complete with full instructions on how to use it.

In each of the groups of words there is a subject only and the thought is incomplete. Neither is, therefore, a sentence, but is a phrase or clause.

Phrases and clauses help to amplify the complete thought which makes up a sentence. There are many kinds of both and we shall discuss them presently. It is their use which makes the difference between a simple sentence and a complex one.

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• PARTS OF SPEECH •

To help ensure that words in a sentence have the correct relationship it is necessary to identify the special job that each word performs. For this purpose we label words as *parts of speech*. Now let us deal with each part of speech in turn.

The noun: this is the name of anything. It can be one of several types, e.g.

Common nouns: book, dog, man.

Proper nouns: the names of actual people, things or places, and beginning always with a capital letter; John, The Radio Times, London.

Abstract nouns: the words used to describe conditions, actions or qualities, i.e. that which you cannot see or touch; efficiency, business, speech.

Collective nouns: the words used to describe groups of things of the same kind; crowd, parliament, fleet.

The adjective: this is the word which describes a noun or *qualifies* it, as is usually said, e.g.

a *pretty* girl, a *new* book, an *arduous* job.

There are two special kinds of adjectives. One is called a *demonstrative adjective*:

this dog, *that* person, *these* conditions

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The other is called a *quantitative adjective*:

twenty rules, *several* telephones, *some* papers.

The verb: this is the word which says something about something else. It can express action, as in:

The men struggled on the floor.

Or it can simply indicate a condition:

The boy is ill with measles.

A sentence must always contain a main verb—i.e. a verb forming part of the substance of the sentence and not merely part of a phrase within the sentence. In the following sentence the main verb is in italics.

If you lose your umbrella, you *can claim* it in the office which is on the third floor.

The verbs *lose* and *is* are not main verbs.

A main verb must always be a *finite* verb, i.e. it must have:

A number (either singular or plural)

A subject

A tense (past, present or future)

In the following sentence: "It was a pity to leave before the end" the finite verb is *was* (subject *It*; number, singular; tense, past.) *To leave* is not a finite verb because it has none of these qualities.

The adverb: this is a word which describes

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(modifies) a verb. It is easy to recognise because it usually ends in *ly*, e.g.

I *quickly* put on my hat and went out.

Take this corner *carefully*.

An adverb can also modify an adjective, e.g.

She has a *completely* black coat.

It can also modify another adverb:

Squirrels eat nuts *very* happily.

Note that in the last example the adverb does not end in *ly*. Other examples are:

rather, too, over.

The participle: this is a form of a verb which does duty as an adjective, that is, it describes a noun, e.g.

A *lighted* match, a *marked* man, a *broken* doll.

The foregoing are known as *past participles*; the other form is the *present participle*, e.g.

A *wilting* flower, *eating* time, the *rising* generation.

The pronoun: this, as its name suggests, stands in place of a noun, e.g.

He is on his way. (*The man* is on his way.)

I prefer *that*. (I prefer *that thing*.)

There are several different kinds of pronoun, which we shall discuss later.

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The preposition: this governs a noun or pronoun, e.g.

She poured the tea *into* the cup.

I walked *under* a ladder.

We bought a book *of* poetry.

Thus you can see that a preposition shows the relationship between one word and another.

The conjunction: this useful word joins two clauses or sentences together, e.g.

Although, but, yet.

The conjunction shows the relationship between two thoughts, where a relationship is possible. Provided that one thought amplifies the other, they can be joined by a conjunction to make one complex sentence instead of two simple ones, e.g.

I shall go out. It is raining.

I shall go out, *although* it is raining.

• PHRASES •

It has already been pointed out that phrases are used to amplify a simple sentence. Now we can look at the different kinds of phrases there are.

A noun phrase: this is a group of words which does the job of work in a sentence usually performed by a single word. A phrase does not contain a finite verb, e.g.

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Everyone was asked *to arrive on time*. (object)

An adjectival phrase: this is a group of words replacing an adjective, i.e. qualifying a noun.

The dog *with the longest pedigree* took the prize. (qualifying *the dog*)

An adverbial phrase: this is a group of words replacing an adverb, i.e. qualifying a verb:

The people waited *outside in the street*. (qualifying *waited*)

• CLAUSES •

A clause is a group of words which contains a finite verb but which does not make sense on its own; it is not a complete thought.

As in the case of phrases, there are different kinds of clauses.

A noun clause: does the work of a noun, e.g.

What you have done can never be forgiven. (subject)

We have decided *that you can go free*. (object)

An adjectival clause: qualifies a noun, e.g.

People *who talk too much* do too little.

An adverbial clause: qualifies a verb, e.g.

The boy sat *where he could be seen*. (qualifying *sat*)

I work here *because the pay is good*. (qualifying *work*)

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If you say that again, I shall sue you. (qualifying sue)

Clauses, like phrases, are used to amplify thoughts within a sentence. Since they contain finite verbs they are more active than phrases, more powerful and flexible.

• SENTENCES •

What have we achieved so far? We have seen that a sentence consists of a subject and a predicate and that it should express a complete thought.

The parts of speech are the bricks with which you construct a sentence. They are:

THE NOUN	the name of anything
THE ADJECTIVE	which describes it
THE VERB	which says something about something else
THE ADVERB	which describes a verb (or adjective or adverb)
THE PARTICIPLE	an adjective formed from a verb
THE PRONOUN	which stands for a noun
THE PREPOSITION	which shows the relationship between words
THE CONJUNCTION	which shows the relationship between thoughts.

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Simple sentences may be made complex by the addition of phrases and clauses.

This is the basic architecture of our language. It is quite possible to write good English without knowing anything about it—just as you can ride a bike without knowing the complicated physical laws which keep you upright. However, if you have developed bad habits which show up as bad grammar, there is only one thing to do. You must learn these basic facts about grammar so that you can see where you go wrong.

Having learned and understood them, you will be able to look at your sentences as you form them (or, during the learning period, afterwards) and detect at once where there may be errors.

You will also be helped by having typical errors pointed out to you in Chapter 8. But you need not learn to avoid these errors parrot fashion. Armed with the knowledge of the architecture of the language, you will see just *why* they are errors.

• MORE ABOUT PARTS OF SPEECH •

Now let us look at some of the parts of speech and learn a little more about them.

The Verb: this can be transitive or intransitive. When it is transitive the verb acts directly on something, as in:

The boxer closed his fist.

When intransitive the verb does not act directly on something, e.g.

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He ran along the road.

Sometimes a verb becomes a noun, as in the sentence, "Running is good exercise." Here *running* is a verbal noun, which is the subject of *is*.

See how the use of a word can vary. In "a *running* tap" *running* (the present participle) is doing the job of an adjective. In "I am *running* for England," it is of course doing its normal job as a verb.

The adverb: there are many kinds of adverbs:

Time: soon, late, then.

Manner: quickly, gently, roughly.

Place: here, there, everywhere.

Degree, cause or reason: very, hardly, for.

The pronoun: there are several types of pronouns:

Personal: he, she, it.

Possessive: mine, yours, theirs.

Relative: who, whom, which.

Demonstrative: that, this, these.

Interrogative: whose, which, what (used in a question)

Examples of use:

Personal: He sat on it.

Possessive: The gun is mine.

Relative: This is the dog *which* barked.

Demonstrative: That is broken; *this* is all right.

Interrogative: Whose is this hat?

Be careful not to confuse the pronoun with the

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adjective. Remember that the pronoun always stands on its own in place of a noun, whereas the adjective describes a noun and therefore is placed next to it, e.g.

Pronoun: *This* should never have happened.

Adjective: *This* accident should never have happened.

Knowledge of the role played by words in a sentence will enable you to construct sentences of varying length and complexity, always confident that your grammar is faultless and, in consequence, your thoughts are being expressed with both clarity and authority.

Short sentences make for clarity, but they can become monotonous if unrelieved by longer sentences now and again. On the other hand, too many long sentences slow down the reader and can produce a pompous, heavy effect, often accompanied by confusion.

The best style is a balanced mixture of short and long sentences, with plenty of variety of construction.

Once you become at home with the use of phrases and clauses you can throw them around with the apparent abandon of a skilled bricklayer handling bricks without the fear of dropping one.

Grammar in action. Let us just take a look at the way grammar establishes the relationship between words, and how the full use of clauses and phrases clarifies this relationship and generally adds colour and interest.

Here is a series of words—the bricks with which we build:

Battle . . . began . . . soldiers . . . flashing . . . weapons
. . . the . . . sun . . . presently . . . standing . . . the
. . . hill . . . villagers . . . gathered . . .

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Although this string of words may bring to mind some sort of scene, it conveys no idea of the relationship which exists between them. It is like the vague recollection of a dream in which the order of events, crazy at the time, has become even more jumbled after waking.

Let us start then with a very simple sentence:

Soldiers were standing.

We know now that we can divide this into subject and predicate:

Soldiers / were standing
SUBJECT / PREDICATE

We can elaborate that sentence to contain most of the parts of speech.

Hostile soldiers were presently standing on the hill.
Can you name all these parts of speech?
They are:

Hostile / soldiers / were / presently / standing
ADJECTIVE / NOUN / VERB / ADVERB / PARTICIPLE
on / the / hill.
PREPOSITION / DEFINITE ARTICLE / NOUN

This tells us more about the soldiers than the first three-word sentence. But in fact the scene and the situation was more complex than our longer sentence tells us.

We can go some of the way towards clarification by the use of a string of separate sentences, each one telling

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us something, but without explaining the relationship between the additional scraps of information, i.e.

The battle had not yet begun. Soldiers were flashing their weapons in the sun. They were presently standing on the hill. The villagers had gathered on the hill.

At this stage we are left with an unanswered question: how were the soldiers, their weapons, the hill, the sun and the villagers connected? Were they all there at the same time?

To answer this question we create one complex sentence, still with a subject and predicate, but built up of clauses and a phrase which add colour and interest, i.e.

Although the battle had not yet begun, soldiers, flashing their weapons in the sun, were presently standing on the hill where the villagers had gathered.

Now let us see what the clauses and the phrase are called:

Although the battle had not yet begun,
ADVERBIAL CLAUSE
soldiers . . . were presently standing on the hill
MAIN CLAUSE
flashing their weapons in the sun
ADJECTIVAL PHRASE
where the villagers had gathered
ADJECTIVAL CLAUSE

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And so from a string of unconnected words, by the use of grammar, we have built up a clear picture of an event and a scene.

In Chapter 6 we shall see how punctuation and paragraphing help to put thoughts across clearly and with maximum interest.

6

Write it clearly

YOU MAY BE FLAWLESS IN YOUR CHOICE OF words, aptness itself in the way you have pitched your letter for the reader, and your style may be a model for others to imitate, but if your punctuation is inaccurate, your words won't hit the target!

Bad punctuation can do more than make a disastrous impression on the reader, it can completely change the meaning of your words.

Consider these sentences.

Keith said Tony was an ass.

"Keith," said Tony, "was an ass."

Or,

The plane took off five minutes after I arrived.

The plane took off; five minutes after I arrived.

Did he catch the plane or not?

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Here are the principal punctuation marks.

Full stop .	Dash —
Exclamation mark !	Brackets ()
Question mark ?	Hyphen -
Comma ,	Quotation marks
Semi-colon ;	(quotes) “ ”
Colon :	Apostrophe ’

Full stop. This denotes the end of a complete sentence. The sentence may be a simple one such as:

The desks are too small.

It may contain two thoughts, as in:

I shall go by train, which will give me the chance to work on the way.

The full stop also indicates abbreviations, such as:

Mr. Herbert Fairweather. The A.A. Handbook.

A full stop is invariably followed by a capital letter.

Exclamation mark. Use this at the end of a sentence instead of a full stop when you want to express an emotion such as surprise, indignation or pleasure, e.g.

. . . and so this means the contract is signed!

I cannot think what came over him!

If you want to treat me this way, there is nothing more to be said!

Exclamation marks are rarely used in straightforward

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business letters, where the emphasis is on clarity of expression, unclouded by emotional content. The exception is in sales letters where they be may used tellingly to denote an important point made.

Question mark. This is used at the end of a question, e.g.

How much does he earn?

Like the exclamation mark, it is usually followed by a capital letter. The exception is when the next sentence is closely connected with the question, such as:

“Have you come to see me?” asked the manager.

“Is he our man?—he looks the type.”

Comma. Generally speaking, you use a comma in the middle of a sentence whenever there would be a natural pause in speaking the passage. It is used to separate thoughts and ideas and also to show where a word may have been left out.

In the following sentences it occurs where there would be pauses:

I reached for my coat, which was on the hook, put it on, and then went out.

Although he has been here a week, I hardly know him.

Note in the first sentence that the phrase *which was on the hook* has a comma on each side of it. This is an important principle of punctuation which must always be observed.

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Wrong: The hat which I have bought, is too big.

Right: The hat, which I have bought, is too big.

An example of the use of the comma to denote a word left out is as follows:

I need pen, paper and ink.

The missing word is *and*. Here you would not put a comma before *and*, because there is no natural pause. You would in this sentence however:

Give me pen, paper and ink, and I will write a masterpiece.

This sentence is really two sentences joined together by the second *and*, and therefore you would pause where it occurs.

An exception to the rule about a comma indicating a missing word is where the word left out is *that* or *which*.

The sentence—

I think this book is mine.

—is really:

I think that this book is mine.

—but no comma should be placed after *think*.

Commas are used to separate adjectives describing the same noun, as in:

It was a warm, dull, misty and typically English day.

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Semi-colon. When you want to join two complete sentences together, you usually use a semi-colon, as:

It is too late to raise the subject; we had better discuss it next time.

If you don't want to use the semi-colon, you must insert a connecting word, in this case:

It is too late to raise the subject, so we had better discuss it next time.

Another use for semi-colons is in lists where the items can be grouped in a logical way. This relieves the monotony of a string of commas and can make the list more easily understood, e.g.

We shall need stout shoes, raincoats and hats; a map, a compass, binoculars and a rifle, with telescopic sights; first aid, food, drink and a stove, which must be compact; a car, trailer and a reserve of fuel.

Colon. This is also used to join complete sentences together, but in a special way: the sentence after it elaborates the preceding one, or gives an example, e.g.

The answer is plain: he will have to go.

These are the alternatives: we must send it at once by sea or later by air.

Dash. This should be used with discretion. It can be a device to try to conceal confused thinking. The more acceptable use is as a form of parenthesis:

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I shall consult Peter—the most knowledgeable man in the company—and then see the chairman.
The building will be ten storeys high—the absolute limit—with a magnificent view of the city.

The less acceptable use is to introduce a completely new thought or change of thought, as in:

The larger size will be impossible to lift—a point none of them has taken into account.

Brackets. These are a more mechanical device than the dash and are used in the following way:

Harold Pearson (aged 45) is employed by R. J. Charles (1960) Ltd.

Hyphen. This is used for joining words or syllables together. Its most common use is when a word cannot be completed on a line and has to be continued on the next. A study of any book will show where words are normally broken by the hyphen in this way.

The hyphen also joins pairs of words with closely associated meanings, e.g. “non-recurring” and “semi-detached”.

Quotation marks. Also called “quotes” and “inverted commas”, these are chiefly used to denote that somebody’s speech is being quoted verbatim, or that written words are being reproduced exactly as written. You have to watch your punctuation rather carefully when quotation marks are being used.

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Here are some examples:

“Although the building is new,” the surveyor explained, “it is not at all well planned.”
“The church is really beautiful,” said aunt Freda.
“Everyone says it is.”

When something is quoted within a sentence already contained by quotation marks, single quotation marks are used, as in:

The foreman insisted, “The handbook says ‘not to be operated without gloves’ so why risk it?”

Quotation marks are also used for book or periodical titles, such as “The Times,” and to indicate that a word is unusual, or is slang, e.g.

When asked how he had fared at college, Derek said he had been “ploughed”.

Apostrophe. This shows that a letter has been left out. You see it in abbreviations such as “don’t” and “doesn’t” and in “He’s here” and “That’ll be all”. Once it was very unusual for these abbreviations to be used in business correspondence, but they are creeping in as letters lose their formality and become more like everyday speech.

It is also used to show the possessive case. Note how it changes position to help show whether the possessor is singular or plural:

One building’s plans. Two buildings’ plans.

LETTER WRITING

• PARAGRAPHS •

For clear, unambiguous writing, good punctuation is not enough. Your writing must be well paragraphed if it is to convey your thoughts smoothly to the reader.

Just as a sentence may be said to be the expression of a single thought, so a paragraph is a succession of clearly arranged thoughts. It is not enough to write them down just as they come into your head. This is not necessarily the best order in which to present them. Your ideas have to be marshalled so that they are in logical order, each sentence in turn being a development of the preceding one.

The paragraph ends when the mind pauses and the sequence begins again.

Paragraphs can be short or long according to the style of the writer and the subject he is writing about. There are no hard and fast rules and nothing at all to fear.

The modern tendency, however, is to keep paragraphs short—just as it is the tendency to keep sentences short.

The starting point in good paragraphing is clear thinking; and the starting point in clear thinking is that momentary pause when you empty your mind of extraneous thoughts, bring the reader into view, and in a relaxed frame of mind concentrate on the thoughts that matter to the exclusion of all others. Do just this and your paragraphs will write themselves.

Here is a letter without paragraphs.

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Dear Harry,

I must tell you about the extraordinary happening of the other night. Perhaps you'll understand why I say that everything happens to me! I awoke from a deep sleep with the rather frightening feeling that there was someone in my room. At first I thought it was part of a dream and I lay still for quite some time while my mind cleared. I could hear nothing and see nothing and yet as I lay there I became more and more conscious that someone was moving about the room. I peered into the darkness. A faint glimmer of light was coming through the open window and as I strained my eyes I gradually made out an object projecting above the sill. Suddenly it came to me: I was looking at the top of a ladder! At the same instant I distinctly heard the rustle of clothing from the corner where my clothes were hanging on my chair. With my heart thumping I slid from the bed and made for that part of the room, keeping between the chair and the window. I guess I must have made quite a noise because the intruder brushed past me in a flash and made for the window, tripping me up as he did so. By the time I had got up he was at the bottom of the ladder and running down the street. The police were round in no time, asking questions galore. I'm afraid I wasn't very helpful because it all happened in the dark. They found no fingerprints and luckily nothing was missing. It's lucky I'm such a light sleeper. Where the ladder came from is the big mystery. For a while I shall be sleeping with the window closed and I suggest you do the same. See you at the week-end. All the best,

Fred.

LETTER WRITING

Read the letter through and as an exercise see how you would paragraph it. There is no fixed rule, except that the letter will read much better *with* paragraphs. Here is one way in which it could be divided up.

Dear Harry,

I must tell you about the extraordinary happening of the other night. Perhaps you'll understand why I say that everything happens to me!

I awoke from a deep sleep with the rather frightening feeling that there was someone in my room. At first I thought it was part of a dream and I lay still for quite some time while my mind cleared. I could hear nothing and see nothing and yet as I lay there I became more and more conscious that someone was moving about the room.

I peered into the darkness.

A faint glimmer of light was coming through the open window and as I strained my eyes I gradually made out an object projecting above the sill.

Suddenly it came to me: I was looking at the top of a ladder! At the same instant I distinctly heard the rustle of clothing from the corner where my clothes were hanging on my chair.

With my heart thumping I slid from the bed and made for that part of the room, keeping between the chair and the window.

I guess I must have made quite a noise because the intruder brushed past me in a flash and made for the window, tripping me up as he did so. By the time I had got up he was at the bottom of the ladder and running down the street.

The police were round in no time, asking questions

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galore. I'm afraid I wasn't very helpful because it all happened in the dark. They found no fingerprints and luckily nothing was missing. It's lucky I'm such a light sleeper. Where the ladder came from is the big mystery. For a while I shall be sleeping with the window closed, and I suggest you do the same.

See you at the week-end. All the best,

Fred.

Notice how the paragraphs make the letter so much more digestible, giving it air and form, and helping to unfold the narrative which forms the content of this letter.

7

Spelling made easier

SPELLING IS EASY FOR A FEW PEOPLE, difficult for most. It should not matter as much as it does; the quality of the thoughts which you express is infinitely more important than the accuracy of your spelling. Unfortunately, however, bad spelling immediately creates a poor impression, especially to people who do not know you. If your words are misspelt, there will be a risk of the reader's being deflected from appreciating what you have to express.

Equally unfortunately there are very few hard and fast rules on spelling to guide you. If it doesn't come naturally to you there is nothing much you can do except consult a dictionary whenever you are in doubt, note down the words which you find difficult and then practise writing them correctly.

If spelling is your bugbear, you can gain comfort from the knowledge that uniform spelling is quite a recent innovation, having become fixed only in the

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18th century. Many great writers, notably George Bernard Shaw, never mastered this elusive art.

In this chapter you will find a list of well over 300 words which often give trouble. It is suggested that you ask a friend to read them out for you to write down. When you have done so, check the way you have spelt them against the correct spelling. Then write down in a handy size notebook those words which you have misspelt, and memorise them.

Later test yourself again. Add to your notebook list any further words which give you trouble, striking out one by one the words which cease to trouble you.

This way your spelling is certain to improve, and quite rapidly. There is absolutely no reason why, with patience and perseverance, you should not join the ranks of the lucky ones for whom spelling holds no fears.

· RULES TO GUIDE YOU ·

Here are a few rules which you should find helpful if you take the trouble to understand, memorise and apply them.

The first five are designed to help you over the obstacle of when to use a double consonant—to remove the doubts such as *immovable* or *imovable*, *defering* or *deferring*, *disimilar* or *dissimilar*?

But first let's define two words of grammar we must use here: prefix and suffix. A prefix is an addition to the beginning of a word; a suffix an addition to the end of a word.

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Rule 1. Whenever you add a suffix to a one syllable word containing a single vowel and ending in a single consonant (other than *w*, *x* or *y*) you double this consonant, e.g.

glad—gladden
ship—shipping

Rule 2. You also double the last consonant when the word has more than one syllable, if it ends in a consonant after a single vowel sound with the accent on the last syllable, e.g.

excel—excellent
prefer—preferring

Rule 3. Don't double the last consonant when it is preceded by two vowels, e.g.

exceed—exceeding
defeat—defeated

Rule 4. Don't double the last consonant when the accent is not on the last syllable, e.g.

offer—offering
limit—limiting

Rule 5. Always double the final *l* when you add a suffix, e.g.

pummel—pummelling
rebel—rebellion
comical—comically
wonderful—wonderfully

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Rule 6. When you add the prefix *un* to a word which already begins with an *n*, you write a double *n*, e.g.
numbered—unnumbered
necessary—unnecessary

Rule 7. When you add the prefix *dis* to a word which already begins with an *s*, you write a double *s*, e.g.
solve—dissolve
similar—dissimilar

Rule 8. When you add the prefix *il*, *im* or *ir* to a word which already begins with the same consonant as in the prefix, you retain both consonants, e.g.
legible—illegible
moral—immoral
responsible—irresponsible

Rule 9. When you make a plural out of a word ending in a consonant followed by *y*, the *y* becomes *ie*, e.g.
pony—ponies
lady—ladies

Note: if the *y* is preceded by another vowel, it is retained, e.g.

chimney—chimneys
buoy—buoys

You also retain *y* when adding a suffix which begins with *i*, e.g.

try—trying
copy—copyist

Rule 10. When you add a suffix beginning with a

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vowel to a word ending in a consonant followed by *e*, you usually drop the *e*, e.g.

grobe—groping

prove—proving

Exception: age—ageing

Rule 11. When you add a suffix beginning with a consonant to a word ending with a silent *e*, the *e* is usually retained, e.g.

care—careless

bore—boredom

Exceptions: argue—argument, due—duly, true—truly, whole—wholly.

Rule 12. Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, e.g.

believe

chief

ceiling

Exceptions: counterfeit, eight, either, inveigle, neigh, neighbour, neither, reign, seize.

• WORDS WHICH SOUND ALIKE •

Quite a few words sound alike but have different meanings and this can be a source of difficulty. Here is a list of similar sounding words arranged in pairs to help you distinguish them.

ascent (rise)

assent (agree)

aural (of the ear)

oral (by mouth)

bail (security)

bale (package)

bare (naked)

bear (animal, carry)

SPELLING

bazaar (market)

beech (tree)

berth (resting place)

bloc (group)

born (brought-forth)

broach (tool, discuss)

buoy (float)

calendar (time)

canon (law)

canvas (material)

capital (city)

carat (value, weight)

ceiling (roof)

choir (group of singers)

colonel (officer)

complement (supplement)

confirmation

(verification)

council (assembly)

currant (fruit)

cymbal (musical

instrument)

dependant (noun)

die (stop living)

draft (money, group)

exercise (practice)

ferment (brew)

find (discover)

flair (aptitude)

formally (ceremoniously)

gorilla (animal)

bizarre (odd)

beach (shore)

birth (arrival)

block (obstruct, shape)

borne (carried)

brooch (ornament)

boy (youth)

calender (pressing machine)

cannon (gun)

canvass (solicit)

capitol (building)

carrot (vegetable)

sealing (closure)

quire (paper)

kernel (seed)

compliment (praise)

conformation (structure)

counsel (advice)

current (flow)

symbol (sign)

dependent (adjective)

dye (alter colour)

draught (air flow)

exorcise (remove evil)

foment (incite)

finer (punished)

flare (flame)

formerly (previously)

guerrilla (fighting)

LETTER WRITING

hangar (<i>building</i>)	hanger (<i>for clothes, etc.</i>)
heir (<i>successor</i>)	air (<i>gaseous mixture, ventilate</i>)
idle (<i>lazy</i>)	idol (<i>graven image</i>)
knead (<i>work dough etc.</i>)	need (<i>necessity</i>)
lava (<i>volcanic</i>)	larva (<i>immature insect</i>)
licence (<i>noun</i>)	license (<i>verb</i>)
lightening (<i>rendering less heavy</i>)	lightning (<i>storm</i>)
loot (<i>booty</i>)	lute (<i>musical instrument</i>)
lumbar (<i>body region</i>)	lumber (<i>wood</i>)
maize (<i>corn</i>)	maze (<i>labyrinth</i>)
mantel (<i>shelf</i>)	mantle (<i>cloak</i>)
meter (<i>instrument</i>)	metre (<i>measurement of length</i>)
missal (<i>book used in Mass</i>)	missile (<i>weapon</i>)
naval (<i>of the sea</i>)	navel (<i>part of the body</i>)
ordinance (<i>legal</i>)	ordnance (<i>military</i>)
paw (<i>foot</i>)	pore (<i>passage in the skin</i>)
peak (<i>summit</i>)	pique (<i>irritating</i>)
peal (<i>chime of bells</i>)	peel (<i>remove skin</i>)
pearl (<i>jewel</i>)	purl (<i>stitch in knitting</i>)
pedal (<i>for the foot</i>)	peddle (<i>sell</i>)
peer (<i>equal, look</i>)	pier (<i>jetty</i>)
peninsula (<i>noun</i>)	peninsular (<i>adjective</i>)
pistil (<i>part of flower</i>)	pistol (<i>gun</i>)
plaintiff (<i>suer</i>)	plaintive (<i>sad</i>)
pole (<i>stick</i>)	poll (<i>vote</i>)
poor (<i>poverty stricken</i>)	pour (<i>decant</i>)
practice (<i>noun</i>)	practise (<i>verb</i>)
pray (<i>say prayers</i>)	prey (<i>plunder</i>)

SPELLING

principal (<i>senior person</i>)	principle (<i>rule</i>)
shear (<i>cut</i>)	sheer (<i>thin, fine</i>)
sight (<i>vision</i>)	site (<i>place</i>)
sign (<i>indication</i>)	sine (<i>term in mathematics</i>)
skull (<i>bone</i>)	scull (<i>propel boat</i>)
sleight (<i>trick</i>)	slight (<i>offend, little</i>)
stationary (<i>not moving</i>)	stationery (<i>paper</i>)
story (<i>tale</i>)	storey (<i>part of building</i>)
surplice (<i>clerical garment</i>)	surplus (<i>excess</i>)
team (<i>number of people</i>)	teem (<i>swarm</i>)
ton (<i>unit of weight</i>)	tun (<i>cask</i>)
trait (<i>distinguishing quality</i>)	tray (<i>salver</i>)
waive (<i>make an exception</i>)	wave (<i>make a gesture</i>)
weather (<i>climate</i>)	whether (<i>if</i>)
wet (<i>damp</i>)	whet (<i>stimulate appetite</i>)
whither (<i>where</i>)	wither (<i>decay</i>)

• WORDS WHICH LOOK ALIKE •

affect (<i>assume, influence</i>)	effect (<i>accomplish</i>)
allude (<i>refer</i>)	elude (<i>evade</i>)
allusion (<i>reference to</i>)	illusion (<i>deception</i>)
apposite (<i>suitable</i>)	opposite (<i>reverse</i>)
beatify (<i>make happy, blessed</i>)	beautify (<i>make beautiful</i>)
commendation (<i>praise</i>)	condemnation (<i>censure</i>)
confidant (<i>trusted person</i>)	confident (<i>feeling assured</i>)
deprecate (<i>disapprove</i>)	depreciate (<i>lose value</i>)
elicit (<i>draw out</i>)	illicit (<i>illegal</i>)
eligible (<i>qualified</i>)	illegible (<i>unreadable</i>)
emend (<i>correct</i>)	amend (<i>alter</i>)

LETTER WRITING

eminent (<i>famous</i>)	imminent (<i>about to happen</i>)
envelop (<i>surround</i>)	envelope (<i>container</i>)
gaol (<i>prison</i>)	goal (<i>objective</i>)
hypercritical (<i>over-critical</i>)	hypocritical (<i>prone to hypocrisy</i>)
ingenious (<i>clever</i>)	ingenuous (<i>naïve</i>)
irrelevant (<i>inappropriate</i>)	irreverent (<i>disrespectful</i>)
magnate (<i>tycoon</i>)	magnet (<i>lodestone</i>)
mendacity (<i>lying</i>)	mendicity (<i>begging</i>)
moral (<i>lesson</i>)	morale (<i>spirit</i>)
personal (<i>private</i>)	personnel (<i>people</i>)
perspective (<i>optical proportion</i>)	prospective (<i>future</i>)
precede (<i>go in front</i>)	proceed (<i>go forward</i>)
prophecy (<i>noun</i>)	prophecy (<i>verb</i>)
rung (<i>part of ladder</i>)	wrung (<i>squeezed</i>)
sculptor (<i>artist</i>)	sculpture (<i>his work</i>)
timber (<i>wood</i>)	timbre (<i>tone</i>)
urbane (<i>courteous</i>)	urban (<i>of the town</i>)

• WORDS WHICH GIVE TROUBLE •

A

abbreviate	accord	acquire
abscess	account	acquitted
accelerate	accredit	address
accidentally	accustom	adjacent
accomplish	achieve	adjoining
accommodate	acknowledgment	adjustable
accumulate	acoustics	advisory

SPELLING

B

aerial	corroborate
aggressive	criticise
allegiance	
allergy	
all right	
annihilate	
anniversary	
annul	
antarctic	
antidote	
any time	
apartment	
appalling	
apparatus	
appear	
applaud	
appliance	
applicant	
appraise	
arctic	
assassin	
assault	
attach	
affidavit	
affix	
aggravate	
aggregate	
audible	
audience	
auxiliary	

C

carburettor	
category	
coercion	
colossal	
commemorate	
commission	
committee	
comparative	
compatible	
conscientious	
conscious	
copyright	
cupboard	
correlate	
correspond	
correspondence	

D

beauty	
beginning	
beige	
bleach	
book-keeping	
boycott	
brief	
brutally	
buoyant	
business	
deceive	
defence	
deficit	
definite	
definitely	
de luxe	
demagogue	
depression	
desiccate	
desperate	
development	
difference	
digestible	
dilemma	
diligent	
disapproval	
dissatisfy	
dissect	
discipline	
discrepancy	
dominant	
dowry	

E

easily

LETTER WRITING

ecstasy
either
eminent
encyclopedia
excel
existence
exorbitant
extraordinary

F
Fahrenheit
familiar
field
fierce
foregone
foresee
foresight

G
government
gradient
grammar
gramophone
gauge
grieve
guidance

H
helpful

hers
hierarchy
humiliate
humorous
hysteria

I
illiterate
illustrate
immaculate
immediate
immoral
immune
imbalance
impermeable
inaccessible
inaccurate
inappropriate
inaugurate
incidentally
inefficient
innocuous
innumerable
instal
intellectual
intercede
irregular
irrelevance
irresistible
irrevocable

isotope

J
jeopardy
jewellery
judgment
juvenile

K
kaleidoscope
knowledge
knot

L
lacquer
leisure
lenient
liaison
library
licence (*noun*)
license (*verb*)
lieutenant
lustrous
lying

M
maintenance

SPELLING

manageable
manicure
manoeuvre
maritime
marvellous
medicine
meringue
mileage
miniature
miscellaneous
mischief
mischievous
mishap
moccasin
monstrous
mortgage
mournful
mystery

N
necessary
necessity
niece
nuisance

O
occasion
occasional
occasionally

occupant
occurred
occurrence
offence
ominous
omission
opponent
opportunity
oppose
optimism
oscillate
override
overrun

P
panicky
paraffin
parallel
parliament
particular
penicillin
per cent
phlegm
plagiarism
plaque
pneumonia
possession
potatoes
practice (*noun*)
practise (*verb*)

prairie
precede
precise
preliminary
profession
professor
pronunciation
psychology

Q
questionnaire
quarantine

R
recede
receipt
receive
recommend
reconnaissance
recurrence
regrettable
relevant
relief
reminisce
removable
rendezvous
veille
rheumatism
rhododendron

LETTER WRITING		
rhubarb	successive	V
rhyme	summary	vacillate
rhythm	supersede	vacuum
	susceptible	vanilla
	syllable	vegetable
	syllabus	veterinary
		victuals
S	T	W
saccharine	tariff	Wednesday
sacrilegious	temporary	whisk
satellite	tendency	withhold
sceptical	tobacco	wonderous
schedule	tongue	wrestle
schism	tonsillitis	
scissors	tumult	
secede	twelfth	
secession		Y
seize		yield
separate	U	
sieve	umbrella	
silhouette	unfair	
sincerely	until	Z
suave	usable	zeal
subpoena		zinc
succinct		
succeed		
successful		

8

Mistakes people make

THERE ARE TWO CHIEF WAYS YOU CAN avoid making the common mistakes that plague others: observe and learn.

By observation you will notice the right way to speak and write English. As you read good books and listen to experienced speakers, so, if you are fully aware, you will be able to imitate them—observe where they may differ from you and make any necessary corrections.

But if you are to be absolutely sure of yourself, this is not enough. You need to learn the elementary rules of grammar and understand what is taught in Chapter 5. There is nothing difficult about them and they will stand you in good stead for all time.

Right now we are going to look at some common errors of English and, by using our knowledge of grammar, see why they are errors.

LETTER WRITING

• MAKING WORDS AGREE •

A common error is failure to make a verb agree with its subject. Now, grammar is essentially the relationship between words, and so, since there is obviously a very close relationship between a verb and its subject, the two must always agree—that is, if the subject is singular the verb must be too; if the subject is plural, then so must be the verb.

This may sound so obvious as to be not worth mentioning. Traps exist however!

For example, when two nouns are joined by *and* they take a plural verb, e.g.

Bacon and egg are delicious.

But if they are joined by *with*, the verb is singular, e.g.

Bacon with egg is delicious.

Also when joined by *either . . . or* or *neither . . . nor*, the verb again is singular, e.g.

Neither bacon nor egg is delicious.

Watch out for collective nouns. Use a singular verb if you mean the group as a whole, e.g.

The jury was out for five hours.

But use a plural verb if you are thinking of the individual members, e.g.

The jury have failed to reach a verdict.

MISTAKES

Relative pronouns can cause trouble. A relative pronoun must agree both with the word it refers to and with the verb of which it is the subject, e.g.

The sergeant is one of the bravest soldiers that have served in the regiment. (not *has* served)

Be careful too of the possessive case coming between a verb and its subject:

One of our planes is missing. (not *are* missing)

Write "I want this kind of shoes". (not *these* kind)
Beware of a simple mistake such as:

Someone has left their hat behind. (should be *his* hat)

So much for the singular and plural problem. Now let's turn to agreement between a verb and its object. We have seen that a finite verb has a subject, and, where it is transitive, an object as well, e.g.

He hit him.

The word *him* is the object and is in the accusative case. This is easy, but confusion can arise when a pronoun which is the object of a verb becomes separated from the verb. Then you may see:

He accused John and I of being absent.

This is incorrect because you would not say "He accused *I*".

Similarly you should write: "I know whom we can trust." (not *who*)

LETTER WRITING

A pronoun is also in the accusative case when governed by a preposition. This is obvious in a simple sentence such as:

The man fell on me.

But it is not so obvious when separated:

The man walked between my sister and I.

This sentence is wrong. You would not write *between I*, so the sentence should read:

The man walked between my sister and me.

Similarly, write: To whom are you referring?
(not *to who*)

Verb trouble. A few people have difficulty in using the past tense of certain verbs correctly, e.g.

It is time I begun my work. (should be *began*)

Here are a few troublesome verbs.

Verb	Past Tense	Past Participle
Begin	began	begun
Brake	braked	braked
Break	broke	broken
Drink	drank	drunk
Rise (<i>intrans.</i>)	rose	risen
Raise (<i>trans.</i>)	raised	raised
Sink	sank	sunk
Swim	swam	swum
Take	took	taken

MISTAKES

Lie and *lay* can be a real worry. Unfortunately the past tense of the first word is the same as the present tense of the second. But that does not make them the same word. Further trouble is caused by the word *lie*, meaning to tell a falsehood, which behaves differently too!

Try to remember that *lay* is transitive—that it must have an object—whereas *lie* does not.

This table should help you:

LIE		LAY		LIE (tell untruth)	
Present	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past
I lie	I lay	I lay	I laid	I lie	I lied
He lies	He lay	He lays	He laid	He lies	He lied
We lie	We lay	We lay	We laid	We lie	We lied
You lie	You lay	You lay	You laid	You lie	You lied
They lie	They lay	They lay	They laid	They lie	They lied

Remember: a hen lays eggs regularly, but a person rarely lays anything but a table or foundation stones—and the latter very rarely!

In Chapter 5 we saw that verbs can sometimes become nouns, such as: "*Smoking* is prohibited." When this happens you must treat the word just like a noun and write: "Do you mind my smoking?" (not *me* smoking)

We also saw that a participle can be used to describe a noun, just like an adjective, e.g. a slinking cat. Whenever you use this form of a verb, make sure that you do actually mention the noun it describes. When the participle is used in an adjectival phrase it is easy to forget this rule, e.g.

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Leaving the park, litter could be seen everywhere.

This is wrong. *Leaving the park* has nothing to describe. The sentence should read:

Leaving the park we could see litter everywhere.

Sometimes you may have to re-write the sentence, as:

Near the park gates litter could be seen everywhere.

It is important to observe this rule, otherwise ambiguity and even absurdity can easily arise.

• WORDS IN THE WRONG ORDER •

This is another cause of ambiguity and absurdity. When you are adding phrases and clauses to a simple sentence, make sure you do so in the right order. Words out of place can also cause obscurity.

The principle to guide you is that the thoughts which occur together in your mind should appear together in your sentence. It is entirely a matter of clear thinking—of remembering the critical pause which clears your mind before putting words on paper.

If you write: "I went out and saw George without a hat," which one was not wearing a hat? You or George? If it was George the sentence is correct, but if it was you, the sentence should read: "I went out without a hat and saw George".

If you write: "I shall tell you what I want by the end of the month," it has a different meaning from: "I shall tell you, by the end of the month, what I

MISTAKES

want." Be sure you know which you intend before you write it.

One word which can change the sense of a sentence according to its position is *only*. It should always be next to the word it qualifies; it is best put right before it.

See how the sense of these sentences is varied:

Only Jim slept in the bus last night.

Jim only slept in the bus last night.

Jim slept only in the bus last night.

Jim slept in the only bus last night.

Jim slept in the bus only last night.

Jim slept in the bus last night only.

• GENERAL WORD TROUBLE •

Not many people today are likely to write "Come here quick." or "She walked slow." Such a mistake is too obvious—i.e. adjectives have been used instead of adverbs, (*quickly* and *slowly*).

But there are plenty of less obvious traps for the unwary, and it is our job here to point them out.

One trouble with words is that of leaving them out when they should stay in.

Look at the sentence, "My brother is as tall, if not taller than I." What we are really saying is, "My brother is as tall as I am, if not taller." In the first version the second *as* has been left out and the sentence is grammatically incomplete without it.

Or: "The caretaker has, and definitely should, finish work at this time." This should read, "The

LETTER WRITING

caretaker has finished, and definitely should finish work at this time."

Sometimes, instead of leaving words out, a writer falls into the trap of putting too many in. One such trap is the double negative. Here he slips in an extra *not*, only to produce an affirmative, e.g.

"I shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't come."

This means something the writer did not intend:

"I should be surprised if he does come."

Sometimes the trouble with words is sheer carelessness—a lack of clear thinking which produces ambiguity. One example of this is in the use of pronouns. You will remember that a pronoun is literally a word that *stands for* a noun. It is imperative therefore that you should leave no doubt about which noun any pronoun you use is standing for.

The actor told the producer that he had broken the contract.

Who had broken it—the actor or the producer? Where there is any doubt, either replace the pronoun by a noun or put the noun after it in brackets, thus:

The actor told the producer that the producer had broken the contract.

Or:

The actor told the producer that he (the producer) had broken the contract.

MISTAKES

Better still, construct the sentence in the first place so that it will read smoothly without either awkward repetition or parenthesis.

Prepositions are little words but they can cause a lot of trouble when used after certain verbs and adjectives. Here is a list of troublesome words with the correct prepositions shown alongside.

agree with (*a person*)
agree to (*a proposal*)
deduce from
dependent on
different from
essential to
immune from
independent of
oblivious of
replace with (*or by*)
sensitive to
substitute for

• THE WRONG WORD •

The English language is rich with so many words of slightly different meaning that it is not surprising that many people choose the wrong word at times. Apart from this there are some logical rules of grammar which dictate the correct word to use in certain contexts and it is necessary to know these rules to be sure of accuracy.

Let's look first at some of these rules.

Firstly, an adjective can exist in three states, e.g.

soft; softer; softest. *or:* good; better; best.

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The second state (softer) is the comparative and the third (softest) is the superlative. As its name suggests, the comparative is used when comparing one noun with another, e.g.

John is taller than Bill.

The superlative is used to show that the noun it describes has no equal, e.g.

Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.

With these simple rules in mind you will see why the following sentence is wrong.

This twin is the biggest.

We are not saying that he is the biggest person in the world—merely that he is bigger than his twin. This, and the following examples are common, but unpardonable, mistakes.

I prefer the smallest of the two.

My left foot is the longest.

Of the three of us, I am the elder.

Some adjectives cannot have a comparative or a superlative—their sense just won't allow them. Two of the commonest are *perfect* and *unique*. Nothing can be better than perfection, so you cannot write "This is more perfect than that." or: "It is the most perfect example I have ever seen." You can, however, say "the most nearly perfect" which is probably a good deal more honest, since perfection is an elusive quality.

MISTAKES

Two comparatives often confused are *less* and *fewer*.

Today less people wear hats than ever.

This sentence is wrong because *less* should be used to denote quantity, not number. The correct version is:

Today fewer people wear hats than ever.

A sentence with the correct use of *less* is:

Less speed means more safety.

Now to another cause of trouble: when to use *shall* and when to use *will*.

There is a story told of a drowning man who called out, "I will drown, no one shall save me!" and so he did. What he meant to say was, "I shall drown, no one will save me!" which is just the opposite. In his state of anxiety he can be forgiven for making the mistake. In writing, when you have time to make that all-important pause for thought, there is no excuse.

The trouble is caused by the fact that either word can express a simple future tense or a complicated one—the latter expressing in addition a promise, a threat, an order or an intention.

An example of the simple future is:

I shall enjoy the party, I'm sure.

Examples of the complicated future are:

I will go, whatever you say. (*Intention*)

The show shall go on. (*Promise*)

You shall do exactly what I tell you. (*Command*)

LETTER WRITING

Which word you use—*will* or *shall*—depends on the subject of the verb and the intended meaning. This table explains:

	SIMPLE	PROMISE, THREAT,
SUBJECT	FUTURE	ORDER, INTENTION
(Singular)		
I	shall	will
You (thou)	will (wilt)	shall (shalt)
He, she or it	will	shall
(Plural)		
We	shall	will
You	will	shall
They	will	shall

Two confusing words that we can consider together are *like* and *as*. Study these sentences:

He was tall like his father had been.
He is the man as has the cash.

Why are both these wrong? In the first one *like* should be *as*, because *like* is an adjective, whereas *as* can be an adverb or a conjunction. There is no place for an adjective in the first sentence, but there is for an adverb.

In the second one *as* should be *who* because we need a pronoun—an obvious mistake but nevertheless one which easily slips in.

Now let's look at some pairs of words in which the wrong one is often used. Firstly:

Due to and *owing* to.

This seems confusing at first but it becomes easier if

MISTAKES

once again we remember that *due* is an adjective. It is used therefore after the verb *to be* and is correct in the following sentence.

The mistake was due to my absentmindedness.

It is incorrect, however, in:

The train was late due to a fall of snow.

In the last sentence *owing to* would have been correct.

The point to remember is that *due to* must be preceded by the verb *to be*. This does not happen in the last sentence.

Owing to is in fact a compound preposition and can govern a noun or pronoun. It is unlikely to occur directly after the verb *to be*. It is correctly used in the following sentence:

Owing to the new legislation all contracts are void.

Now let's look at *providing* and *provided*. Is the following sentence correct?

I said I would go, providing we went by car.

The answer is no. The word to use is *provided*, because what the writer meant was *on condition we went by car*. *Providing* should never be used in this context.

If you have difficulty in remembering which is correct, simply substitute *if*.

Another two words which get mixed up are *infer* and *imply*. Many people use the word *infer* when they

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really mean *imply*. Suppose you felt that your correspondent doubted your integrity. You might write:

Are you inferring that I am a liar?

If you did, you would be using the wrong word—the one which has overtaken the other in popularity. You should have said:

Are you implying that I am a liar?

If you are still in doubt, look up the meanings of both words in a dictionary.

Many people wrongly prefer to use a long word when a short word will do, and often they find themselves in trouble when they do. One example is that of preferring *anticipate* to *expect*. Here are some wrong uses.

When do you anticipate retiring?

We never anticipate good weather for our holidays.

We wrote anticipating a favourable answer.

In every case the right word would have been *expect* (in the first sentence with *to retire* instead of *retiring*), or in the last sentence, *expecting*.

The correct meaning of *anticipate* is forestall, as in the following examples:

The company put up their prices, but we anticipated their move and bought in advance.

Harvey's success as a manager lies in his ability to anticipate his staff's reactions to the changes.

Finally, two words about the same length which

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many people think are interchangeable when in fact they have quite different meanings.

Surprised means taken off guard, as in:

The policeman surprised the burglar as he switched on the light.

Astonished means amazed at some unexpected happening, as in:

The burglar was astonished when the policeman switched on the light.

Perhaps this story will help you to remember which one to use.

A certain professor of English, who chose his words with great care, was a little in love with the housemaid in his home.

One day his wife returned unusually early from shopping and found him sitting in the drawing-room with the housemaid on his knee.

"Oh, George!" she cried, "I *am* surprised."

Even in that terrible moment the professor's love of syntax didn't desert him.

"No my dear," he countered. "You are astonished; it's I who am surprised."

9

Psychology in business

SO FAR WE HAVE SEEN THAT WRITING A GOOD letter can be very much easier than most people imagine. We have seen the importance of clear thinking before starting to write and we have studied how this can be achieved by the momentary pause beforehand.

We have learned to keep the reader in mind—to write with his needs before us. And we have seen that in almost every letter the writer is seeking to create an effect—to convey a thought and so introduce a mood or bring about greater understanding; or else to stimulate action for the good of the writer or the reader, or both!

From there we have understood how to use imagination in writing and the devices there are for adding colour. Then we have looked at our vocabulary to find ways to increase it and make it more effective, learning the kind of words to use and the ones to avoid.

PSYCHOLOGY

Grammar came next: the architecture of language; the use of words in correct relationship to each other, so as to convey meaning forcefully and clearly without clumsiness or ambiguity.

Following naturally on this came spelling—the difficult art, which confuses so many people. Here we examined the rules for better spelling and saw how to improve it by the use of a notebook, a dictionary and a list of troublesome words.

• PUTTING YOUR SKILLS TO WORK •

All this has been preparatory. Now we come to the stage where we are able to use the techniques, which we have studied, in business and private life.

First let us deal with business correspondence; after that we can turn to letters we write as private individuals but of a business nature, then finally to purely private correspondence.

Most business letters are predominantly one of five types. They are letters to:

1. Convey information
2. Seek information
3. Ask for action to be taken
4. Acknowledge a request for action
5. Confirm a conversation.

It can be seen that all of them except the last two demand some sort of action on the part of the reader.

In No. 1 we are asking him to absorb the information we are passing to him. It may be the opening of a new branch, a change in price or the appointment

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of a new manager. Whatever the information, we don't want the reader to grunt and forget: we want him to note it for future reference.

In No. 2 we are asking for a reply to a question. This may be an enquiry as to whether he can supply a certain kind of goods, a delivery date or particulars of a would-be employee's experience. This is a request for direct action of a special nature—the supplying of a written reply.

In No. 3 we are asking for action to be taken, beyond the mere supplying of information. We may be giving an order which will set a factory humming to supply a million units of a product. We may be asking a person to attend a meeting or a company to pay a bill.

Nos. 4 and 5 should only be used when the request for action or the subject of the conversation was important enough to justify adding to the paper war. Thousands of man hours, bits of paper and stamps are wasted over needless correspondence. Sometimes you would think the telephone had never been invented.

It is good business practice to confirm something when there could be a doubt that it was received or that it was understood. There is also justification for putting something of importance in writing where the other person you are dealing with has the habit of forgetting—or worse still, of misconstruing. Some people, either consciously or unconsciously, change an agreed course of action in their mind as time passes. It is useful to be able to produce written evidence about the true state of affairs.

PSYCHOLOGY

• PRODUCING THE RIGHT EFFECT •

Whenever you write a business letter which calls for someone to act, remember the paramount rule of keeping him in mind. Picture him at work. If you know him, bring a picture of him into your mind's eye and see him sitting in his surroundings doing his job of work. If he is someone you have never met, try to visualise him in his work by comparing him with a colleague doing similar work, or put yourself in his place.

Take into account his status in his firm and the relationship between your firm and his, whether you are equals or whether one has the advantage over the other, such as when one firm is the customer.

This will guide you as to whether to use the direct method or the roundabout method. It has been said that nearly every business letter is a sales letter: you have to sell the other man an idea. In all three types of letter we are discussing you have to sell him the idea that he should do something for you. The readiness with which he may be expected to accept the idea will determine the length and tone of your letter.

As a general rule, keep every letter as short as is compatible with courtesy and good manners. The tempo of modern business doesn't allow for wasted writing or reading time.

Your letter must be businesslike without being unnecessarily cold. It must never be so abrupt as to be rude—unless rudeness is your deliberate intention!

It must be direct and unambiguous but it should still

be fresh in style and convey something of your character and personality where possible.

• AVOIDANCE OF JARGON •

Write naturally. Write as you would speak. Avoid unnecessarily long words and sentences, and don't repeat yourself. Keep clear of catch-phrases and clichés. These are the basic rules to a good business style.

Suppose you wanted a supplier of goods, which you intend purchasing, to meet you to discuss an order. If you spoke to him over the telephone you would probably say, "Please meet me next Wednesday the fifteenth at my Midland office at eleven so that we may discuss the next order." He would know exactly what you meant, and you would be wasting neither words nor time.

If you were writing to him, however, and you used bad business style you might find yourself writing:

It would be appreciated if you would arrange to be at my Midland office at 11 a.m. next Wednesday, the 15th instant. The purpose of this meeting will be a discussion regarding the next order to be placed with you by us.

If you wrote this you would be breaking all the basic rules and you would have achieved neither clarity nor courtesy.

Don't be afraid of using everyday expressions in your business letters. You can say "looking into" instead of "investigating", for example. Everyone

will know what you mean and it sounds much more friendly.

However, don't make the mistake of combining two styles in one letter. If you are placing an important order and the deal is straightforward, you are bound to be rather formal. To slip in a colloquial expression could be altogether wrong.

To avoid jargon, the best plan is to start your letter properly with the first sentence.

If your letter is the first of a series, go straight into stating the reason for writing. Write:

Dear Mr. Spencer,

During the past month we have had some trouble with the finish on the components you are supplying . . . etc.

If you are replying to a letter, write:

Dear Mr. Hargreaves,

Thank you for your letter of April 18th about the plans for the new Sales Department.

Having written this you can get on with the point of your letter. Don't write "*Yours to hand of the 18th inst.*" or "*We are in receipt of your esteemed favour of the 18th inst.*" Some people still do.

If you have enclosed something with the letter, don't write "*Enclosed please find . . .*" or "*Enclosed herewith . . .*". Simply put "*I enclose . . .*" or "*I have enclosed . . .*" or even "*Here is . . .*".

Go easy on that little word "very". It is very over-worked!

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Here is a list of words to avoid, coupled with their translation into "English".

acquire	get
advise	tell
anticipate	expect
apparent	clear
appreciate	realise
approximately	about
are in receipt of	have received
ascertain	find out
assist	help
be of service	help
cease	stop
commence	begin, start
communicate	write
communication	letter
desire	want
due to the fact that	because
expedite	rush, hasten
favour	letter
find necessary	need
former	it
forthwith	now, at once
immediately	now, at once
implement	carry out, do
inform	tell
inquire	ask
invariably	always
latter (the)	it
necessitate	need

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obtain	get
of even date	today
of yesterday's date	yesterday
owing to unforeseen circumstances	unexpectedly
particulars	details
peruse	study
proceed	go
purchase	buy
request	ask
require	need
same	it
state	say
sufficient	enough
utilise	use

10

Business letter technique

WHETHER YOU ARE DICTATING YOUR business letter into a recorder or to a shorthand typist, it is best to make some notes beforehand. Of course this is unnecessary when the letter is very short and simple.

Set down the points you intend to make and having done so, arrange them in the best order, taking into account the advice given in the previous chapter. You should find that each point you have set down makes a separate paragraph.

Don't worry if you are not used to dictating. It will seem a little strange at first, but you will soon relax and improve, especially if you bear in mind the concentration exercise given in this book. Dictating is actually a help to good style. The fact that your words are spoken assists you, because it makes you use short everyday words and straightforward sentences.

If you have a good shorthand typist you can leave

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the punctuation to her. If not you will have to give it to her as you dictate.

When you want to alter something you have just dictated, it is a good plan to use a word which she will recognise as the signal that you want to do so. A word such as "correction" will do.

Read your letters through before signing, and if there are enclosures, check that they are pinned to the letter, or that they will in fact be enclosed.

· SETTING OUT THE LETTER ·

A carbon copy of each letter is kept. The name and address of the person to whom you are writing is put at the top left-hand side of the letter above the salutation. It is then clear from the carbon where the letter went.

The letter should carry a reference number or series of letters, usually the writer's and typist's initials separated by a stroke. These may go at the head of the letter on either side, or at the very bottom on the left-hand side, according to taste.

The date goes on the top right-hand side, and should give the day of the month, the month and then the year, e.g. 3rd March 1965. This arrangement separates the two numbers.

It is often helpful to give a heading to a letter. This indicates to the reader what it is about, and, if the letter is to sell something, it can be enticing. A heading also helps to identify the letter once it has been filed.

Nowadays, it is customary to address a person as J. Smith, Esq. or John Smith, Esq. rather than Mr.

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J. Smith. Correct forms of address for people with special positions, ranks or titles are given at the end of the book.

If you are writing to a person whose name is not given, e.g. "The Manager," then use the salutation, "Dear Sir,". If the letter is formal or you do not know the person, use his surname only, e.g. "Dear Mr. Smith,". If you know him quite well, use his first name, e.g. "Dear John,".

When writing to a woman, the same rules apply, except that you write "Madam" instead of "Sir".

The body of the letter should be centred on the page with an ample margin on the right-hand side. Appearance is enhanced if a single line space is left between paragraphs.

After the body of the letter comes the subscription—the few words just above your signature. The rules to help you decide what to use are quite simple. If the letter is formal use "Yours faithfully," or if not quite so formal, "Yours truly,". If you know the person, and you want to be friendly, use "Yours sincerely,".

It is wrong to begin "Dear Sir," and finish "Yours sincerely," or to begin "Dear John," and finish "Yours faithfully,".

There should preferably be a complete sentence at the end of the body of the letter, immediately before the subscription. It is wrong to finish:

*Hoping that we can expect your order,
Yours truly,*

You should write:

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*Hoping that we can expect your order,
We are,
Yours truly,*

or, better still:

*We hope that we can expect your order,
Yours truly,*

Unless your signature is perfectly legible, have your name typed just below it, and if the letter is at all formal, below that put your position in the company.

A well laid out letter creates a good impression of yourself and the company you work for, and puts the thoughts and ideas you want to convey in a favourable setting.

Here is a model letter, demonstrating the points which have been made.

7th May, 1965

*Dennis Harcourt, Esq.,
Messrs. Allan James & Co. Ltd.,
26 Humphrey Place,
London,
W.14.*

Dear Mr. Harcourt,

PRESS ADVERTISING

*Thank you for your letter of 4th August.
I have been able to make the changes to the schedule which you mention, as you will see from the revised version which I am now enclosing.*

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Please let me know if you are now able to get your Board's approval. We should place firm orders with all the publications as soon as possible if we are to be sure of insertions at the time we want them.

Yours sincerely,

*(Terence Caswell)
Account Executive*

TC/IRD
(Enclosure)

11

Letters that sell

IN MANY WAYS MOST LETTERS ARE SALES letters. Each one has at least one idea to *sell*—a thought for the reader to accept, even if the letter isn't designed to produce action.

A sales letter, therefore, can be a personal letter, but we usually think of it as a business letter, and then as a special kind of business letter—the circular letter.

This is a letter which is printed on the company's letterheading (sometimes specially redesigned for the purpose) using typewriter face. Reproduction may be by letterpress, which creates a clearcut effect; by lithography, which can produce a softer effect more like typewriting; by printing through a cloth, to create the effect of a typewriter ribbon; or with a stencil.

The processes vary considerably in their likeness to actual typewriting and in cost. An expert in the subject will be able to advise on the best method for any particular job.

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Sometimes the name and address of the addressee may be "matched in" above the salutation (See page 101). In this book we are concerned chiefly with the content of a sales letter, so let's take a look at the basic rules for writing effective sales letters.

• RULES FOR SUCCESS •

You may break almost any of the rules given here with the exception of rule number one. This says clearly and categorically: study your reader and write *You*, not *I* (or *We*). The temptation is almost overpowering. The company you work for is sure to be proud of its record, its history, its methods, its premises, its products and services. How human to lead off by saying how excellent they are; but how basically wrong to do so!

Consider these two examples.

Dear Sir,

Our air services have now been extended to include Spain in our schedules and we are pleased to announce that we can arrange fast, cheap tourist flights to the most popular resorts.

Dear Sir,

Your suntan will be the envy of your friends. Your holiday will be the one you will remember always. You can now fly direct to Spain, to the most popular resorts by fast, cheap tourist flights.

In the first example the whole letter centres round the

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writer, and the reader is not mentioned once. In the second one the reader enjoys all the attention, and this is the letter he will read and probably act upon.

Most people are basically self-centred, but in a civilised community they must constantly suppress their selfish motives in order to live in harmony with their fellows. In a sales letter you give them the opportunity to bask in the luxury of selfishness, and in so doing suppress your own desires to think first of your own interests.

So, in beginning any sales letter, talk *You* not *I*, and maintain this bias as far as possible throughout the letter.

The second rule is well known to all professional writers of sales letters. It can be summarised in four letters which incidentally spell out a woman's name, so making the rule easy to remember. AIDA—*attention, interest, desire, action*: these are the four components of every successful sales letter. The rule is to include them in that order.

Your aim in any sales letter is to:

Gain attention
Sustain interest
Arouse desire
Effect action.

We shall later see how to bring these aims about.

The third basic rule is known as The Rule of Seventy: to try to ensure that at least seventy per cent of your words consist of one syllable. In this chapter we shall see the value of simplicity in writing effectively.

LETTER WRITING

• IMPORTANCE OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS •

Most people today complain that they receive too many circulars. They say they don't bother to read the vast majority of them. Some members of the community, such as doctors, receive several every day, and, together with their accompanying brochures, the total weight of this mail in a year runs into hundredweights!

So, to get *your* letter read, it must be right, from the first word.

This is why it pays to use the best possible envelope. A private individual will usually open his own mail; a businessman's mail will be opened by his secretary. It makes no difference: unless the envelope is reasonably good and is neatly and correctly addressed, the chances are that the letter will not be read by the person for whom it is intended.

The private individual will give it no more than a casual glance to make sure it is not a bill; the businessman's secretary will throw it away as unworthy of occupying her boss's valuable time.

If the envelope is addressed by a machine, make sure that the plate has given a clear impression. The envelope bears the reader's own name and address; to him these are the sweetest words in the English language and he expects them to be accurate and legible. If they are not, he feels slighted.

Best results come from using a sealed envelope complete with postage stamp—not franked. However, more and more companies now use a franking machine and so the postage stamp is not vital. Another useful

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device is the imitation sealed envelope. In this, the usual flap is sealed, but one of the side ones is tucked in. Mail sent in one of these still goes at the unsealed rate.

Remember that you can print on the envelope if you wish. This means you can gain the prospect's attention from the outset with a slogan such as:

Bargain offer inside!

or:

A personal message that's worth money . . .

Remember too that if you are using a franking machine you can employ it to print your own slogan at no extra cost.

• GETTING THE RIGHT EFFECT •

A successful sales letter not only achieves its immediate objective, it does so without harming company-customer goodwill.

It is well to stress this point, because a letter can easily achieve its short-term objective and at the same time do a great deal of harm over the long term. For example, a forceful and discourteous letter demanding payment for an overdue account (yes, this is a sales letter!) may obtain the money, but so antagonise the customer in the process that he vows never to deal with your company again.

Alternatively it may seek to obtain a sales lead for a representative to call, and succeed because it misrepresents the true reason for his call. As a result, the representative sees the prospect all right, but when the

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prospect wakes up to this deception he loses no time in evicting the representative who has only succeeded in wasting time. An example of this is where a company sells encyclopaedias by implying that they are recommended by the education authorities, whereas in fact no such official recognition exists.

It may be found that a series of letters will produce better results than a single shot. This is particularly so when a high-priced article or service is involved and the prospect needs reminding, informing and reassuring before he will take action.

A series of letters should always be planned as a whole—not created one at a time without the overall effect in mind.

• HOW TO JUDGE SALES LETTERS •

The real test of any sales letter is, of course, the result, both long term and immediate, which it produces. However this can take time and it is useful to be able to judge the probable effectiveness of a letter before it goes out. We can do this by considering three factors: looks, content, and style.

First of all, looks. We have already discussed how a good envelope and clear address can make a good first impression, and we have outlined the various printing processes. One point which should be mentioned concerns the signature. This looks better if it is in a second colour, best of all blue. However, this adds to the printing bill, and, desirable though it may be, we must consider the alternatives.

One obvious possibility is to print the signature in

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black. This unfortunately looks drab and mass-produced, so let's turn to the next possibility. This is to print the second colour of the letterheading in blue and use the same blue for the signature. You may feel outraged that your precious "house" colour should be so summarily changed, but it is in a very good cause. If the letter is going to people who do not usually hear from you, it matters very little what colour your letterheading is. Or you may even choose to have a special letterheading designed for the mailing, second colour blue, and showing a picture of the article you are selling. The third possibility is to sign the name by hand. This may be practicable for a short print run, but is too time-consuming for big mailings. Also the signature tends to become less and less legible as the labour continues.

Another point which affects the letter's looks is the way it is folded. See that the fold is neat, and if possible arranged so that it opens up on something arresting or at least interesting.

Don't spoil a good letter and well-designed, colourful letterheading by economising on paper. Always use the best paper that the job can afford.

The way the letter is typed for printing is most important. It will pay to type and re-type the letter to avoid awkward breaks and anything which mars either sense or appearance. Generally speaking it is preferable not to match-in the prospect's name and address at all rather than do so indifferently.

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• ANALYSING AIDA •

Now let's have a closer look at the four parts of any sales letter—AIDA: attention, interest, desire, action.

Here is a sales letter with the four parts indicated:

Dear Sir,

ATTENTION *Did you know that just about anyone can write a first-class letter?*

INTEREST *You don't need a classical education; you need not be a born writer. A new book explains how anyone can master the basic psychology of letter writing—for home and business—explains easy-to-learn techniques, and actually brings about an improvement within a few hours of reading.*

DESIRE *Why struggle along without the expert advice which can spell profits at work and a new joy to writing at home?*

ACTION *By posting the enclosed reply-card now—while you think of it—you can secure this valuable work for yourself. You run no risk. If you don't agree that the book is everything we claim, return it within seven days and you need not pay a penny. Act now—post that card today!*

Yours truly,

Short and to the point, this letter has all the basic ingredients of a good sales letter. Now let us examine them one by one.

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Attention. To gain attention you can use many tricks: you can excite curiosity, entertain or even shock. You can evoke compassion or appeal to the reader's self-interest. A word of warning, though: use a strong opening by all means, but be sure that the rest of the letter relates to it, supports it and justifies it.

Here are a few good openers.

When did you last look at your watch?
Panda to the beast in you!
This will save you money.
What's pneu in pneumatics . . .
Ever feel you're being followed?
Suppose today were your last!

It's easy to think of a good opener. The harder task is to relate it to the purpose of the letter.

Interest. Here we elaborate on the opener; tie it in with the gist of the letter, introduce the goods or service we have to sell and say something about them. A special word of warning here: remember to write *You* not *I*. Once you start describing the goods or service it is easy to get carried away into a string of superlatives and bury the reader in the process! Your job in any sales letter is to make the reader believe he needs help, show him you can provide it, and then go on to prove it.

Desire. This is probably the most important part of the letter. Here you not only have to arouse a desire for the product or service in general, you have to give good

reasons why the reader should choose yours rather than anyone else's. So state your advantages: price, quality, quick delivery, after-sales service—whatever they may be. A special word here about price: if this is low, stress that nevertheless the quality is high. By the time you are writing this part of the letter, you must be sure you know what kind of action you are leading up to.

Action. What do you want the reader to do—request a representative to call, send for a catalogue, return a reply-paid card, purchase outright or accept a free trial? Make up your mind, create a sense of urgency and make the action easy. You can add to the sense of urgency by fixing a definite deadline.

• STYLE •

In a sales letter there is no room for long-windedness, mundanity or ambiguity. You must try to be original, but beware that your originality doesn't distract the reader from your intentions. You can bring in an element of surprise and incongruity—even humour or satire. All these help to keep the reader reading.

The most important ingredient of your style in a sales letter however is your ability to persuade. You can achieve this if you always keep the reader in mind, relating *your* services to *his* needs. Never exaggerate, don't run down your competitors, don't underestimate your prospect's good sense, but achieve your persuasiveness by the sheer force of your sincerity. Be truthful without being dull and you will write sales letters that really sell.

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Routine business letters

HAVING GRASPED THE PRINCIPLES WHICH LIE behind a good sales letter, it becomes much easier to write a routine business letter. You have less scope for imagination, but more opportunity to be direct in your style and approach.

Let's set down a few examples based on the five types of business letters mentioned in Chapter 9.

Conveying information. Here is a letter to a customer telling him about the opening of a new branch of the business in his district.

Dear Mr. Perkins,

On the first of next month we are opening a new branch in your district, at 53 High Street, just opposite the Town Hall.

The Manager will be Mr. Harry Pollard, whose 23 years

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of experience in the trade will be available to you from the outset. Our showroom will be one of the best equipped in the country, and we feel sure that we shall be able to offer you an unparalleled service.

If you are passing, do please call and see us. You will be sure of a cordial welcome.

Yours truly,

*Tony Jeffreys
Managing Director*

Note that this short letter tells the customer all the essential information he requires—location, name of manager, date of opening—and also slips in some quiet salesmanship at the same time, by mentioning the manager's 23 years' experience and the excellence of the showroom. Moreover, by ending with an invitation it implies a polite request for action which shows that the company is ready to do business.

Seeking information. Here is a letter from one sales manager to another asking for information about an applicant for a job.

Dear Mr. Gray,

We recently advertised for a South Sales Representative and received an application from a Peter Hawkins, who has given your name as a referee.

He has told us that he worked for you from February to December last year and left to gain wider experience.

I should be grateful if you would let me have your opinion

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of his character and ability, and also his suitability for the position we have advertised.

Naturally your reply will be treated in strict confidence.

Yours truly,

*A. T. Hodgson
Sales Manager*

Sometimes a letter may convey information and also seek information at the same time; as in this letter from the proprietor of a radio shop to a potential customer:

Dear Mr. Arthur,

Early last month you came to see us for advice on buying a television set and I recommended that you wait until the new season's models were announced.

We now have full details of all the sets likely to interest you, so perhaps you would like to call in for a demonstration. If you prefer, we will send a representative round to discuss them.

Just telephone and ask for me personally and I shall see that your enquiry receives prompt attention.

Yours faithfully,

*Paul Cornman
Manager*

Note the use of the word "perhaps" This is a handy way of asking a person to do something without it seeming to be an order. Also note the construction of the last sentence which requests action, but puts it in a friendly and courteous way.

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Asking for action to be taken. Here is a letter asking for a representative to call.

Dear Sirs,

We were interested to receive sales literature about your new calculating machine. Would you please send a representative to discuss it in more detail. If you will telephone my secretary, she will arrange a convenient time.

Yours faithfully,

*T. H. Geary
Accountant*

This letter is short and to the point without being curt.

Acknowledging a request for action. This should be used only when it is important that there should be no doubt about the instructions given or action intended.

Dear Tom,

Confirming our telephone conversation this morning, we can supply a spare 4k motor from stock and will make the necessary modifications as quickly as possible.

Unless you hear to the contrary, it will arrive by UPA Flight 347 on Tuesday, August 16th for you to collect.

I hope that you will be able to resume full production with the least possible delay.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Taylor

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Although the two people concerned know each other well, the letter is kept as short as possible because Tom is obviously in a fix and won't want to spend time reading anything unnecessary. This is a simple way of showing consideration for the reader and the job he is doing.

This example demonstrates both the last two types of business letter.

13

Win that job

FEW LETTERS ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO WRITE than the one designed to get you the job you really want. The more you want the job, the greater the difficulty in composing the letter which will help you secure it.

Never was it more important to consider the reader. If the position has been advertised he may have hundreds of letters to read. From these he will select the applicants who appear to justify an interview. After the interviews he will draw up a "short list" from which the successful applicant will be selected.

There are two temptations to resist!

The first is to be too clever in an attempt to make your letter stand out from the others. The second is to seem over-eager.

Unless one of the attributes you are expected to have is an abundance of originality and cheek, it is better to resist the unusual approach. It is never advisable to make extravagant claims. If you want your letter to be

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read, simply consider your reader. What does he want? He wants the best person for the job and he wants to be able to select him as quickly, surely and pleasantly as possible. All you have to do is convince him that you have the experience, ability, character and personality he is looking for.

You won't do this if you seem over-eager. By all means show your eagerness in full measure once you know full details about the job—its responsibilities, prospects, conditions and the kind of people with whom you would be working.

Once you feel that this is *the* job above all others, be as eager as you like. But at the beginning, to appear too anxious gives the impression that you are the kind of person for whom any job will do, that you are desperate, and probably discontented too.

From the start you must maintain your dignity. Naturally you are curious, eager to know more and keen to be granted an interview. This is what you must convey, backed up by a certain amount of information about your background, and expressed in a clear, grammatical way to give the right impression of your education and ability to express yourself.

You should include in the letter at least one convincing reason why you are applying for the position—and *not* that you are out of work or unhappy where you are! Your reason should be pertinent and positive.

It is a good idea to attach to the letter a brief history about yourself, often called a *curriculum vitae*. This can begin with your date and place of birth, then go

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on to list details of your education, examinations passed during and after school, service in the armed forces (if any), and details of all your previous employment. If you are answering a number of advertisements you can have this sheet duplicated.

If your handwriting is bad you would be well advised to type your letter. Otherwise write it yourself so that as much as possible of your character is available to the reader.

Should you state what your present salary is? This depends on whether it is likely to help your application or not. Generally it is best to tell the reader all that is relevant and likely to help you secure the all-important interview. If your present salary will assist this aim, then certainly reveal it. If not, it can wait until you have been able to impress your prospective employer by your bearing at the interview.

You would be ill-advised to state the salary you require, unless it is specifically asked for. Let that be the subject of discussion later at the interview when you will have a better idea of the duties and responsibilities of the position, and your prospective employer will have the opportunity to assess what you are worth to him.

Never enclose original references with your letter. Don't enclose copies of references at this stage unless asked for, but be prepared to send them later or take them to the interview.

To some extent the nature of your letter will depend on the type of advertisement. If it is written formally, your style should veer towards formality. If it is in

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the more contemporary colloquial style, you may expect that the company will be able to appreciate a more relaxed style in your letter.

You may write in greater detail and with more frankness in answer to an advertisement which states the name of the company instead of a box number.

The company using the box number is withholding a vital piece of information and you should consider yourself entitled to a measure of protection as well. If this is the case you are perfectly justified in saying that you will be glad to supply full details of yourself on hearing from the company.

So far we have been considering letters written in answer to advertisements. They are not the only kind of letter. Among other possible contingencies is the occasion when you write to a company on chance, because you have heard that it is expanding or that a position is becoming vacant. We shall be considering examples of all kinds of letters in this chapter.

• REPLYING TO AN ADVERTISEMENT •

Here is an example of a formal advertisement, with company's name mentioned, and a suitable reply:

SALES REPRESENTATIVE wanted by J. Randall & Co. Ltd., manufacturers of office stationery. Must have previous experience in this field. Write full details, including present salary to Mr. A. Binns, Sales Manager, J. Randall & Co. Ltd., Bristol, Somerset.

LETTER WRITING

Dear Sir,

I wish to apply for the post of sales representative which you are advertising in today's Daily —.

I have had seven years' experience as a sales representative, four of them in the stationery business, as you will see from the enclosed curriculum vitae.

My present salary is £1,450. Prospects where I am are good, but I should welcome the opportunity to join your company, which I regard as the leader in the field.

I am married with two children, aged nine and seven. I hold a clean driving licence.

Yours faithfully,

Businesslike and straight to the point, this is the kind of letter which, accompanied by details of previous experience, would be likely to secure an interview. Note the mention of marital status, family and driving ability, all of which are facts which a future employer needs to know at some stage.

Perhaps you are about to apply for your first job. The advertisement and your reply may be along these lines:

SHORTHAND TYPIST required by West End travel agency. Interesting work and good conditions with 5-day week and luncheon vouchers. Apply Mrs. A. Cuthbert, Carefree Travel Ltd., Merriott St., London, W.1.

Dear Madam,

With reference to your advertisement in today's —,

WIN THAT JOB

I should like to be considered for the position of shorthand typist.

I am nineteen years of age, and I have just finished a secretarial course at —. I was educated at —, where I passed my G.C.E. with four 'O' levels and two 'A' levels.

My shorthand speed is — and my typing speed is —.

I should be available to attend an interview at any time which is convenient for you.

Yours faithfully,

It is best to type a letter of application for a position of shorthand typist or secretary, paying particular attention to the setting out of the letter. It should contain no mistakes! If the subjects of G.C.E. passes are relevant to the type of job, then they should be listed.

Now let's look at a less formal advertisement and a specimen reply.

ALL ROUNDER ?

The kind of man we are looking for is probably working in a large advertising agency as account executive—able enough, but slightly frustrated. He would be excited at the prospect of working with a young team in a new agency where copy and layout will be part of his work. If this man sounds like you, write to Humphrey Barrett, Copy Chief, Addison Associates, Fulton Rise, W.1.

Dear Mr. Barrett,

I read your advertisement in this week's — with interest because you exactly described my situation.

LETTER WRITING

As account executive with Franks Ltd., I have plenty of responsibility and a good salary, but I miss the satisfaction of working on a problem as a whole and in depth.

You will see from my curriculum vitae that I am 28, single, with sound agency experience.

I hope I may have the opportunity to hear from you more about this work, and also to tell you more about myself.

Yours sincerely,

Here is an example of an advertisement with a box number, together with a specimen reply:

WORKS MANAGER wanted by manufacturer of light engineering components in the Midlands. Must have held similar position and be used to modern production methods and management techniques. Write giving details of previous experience, qualifications, salary, etc. to Box —.

Dear Sir,

I should like to be considered for the position of Works Manager which you are advertising in today's issue of —.

As you will see from the accompanying details of my career, I have had sound experience in works management, backed by first-class training and qualifications.

My present salary is £1,800 and my reasons for considering a change are to widen my experience and enjoy early advancement.

Yours faithfully,

WIN THAT JOB

If you are asked to attend an interview and there is time for a written reply, your letter should be despatched promptly and should be short and business-like:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 15th May.

I shall be pleased to attend an interview at your office on Wednesday 22nd May, at 11.45 a.m.

Yours faithfully,

If you are successful you should receive a letter of appointment. This should state the essential details of your conditions of employment, such as starting date and time, office hours, position or nature of work, holidays, salary and expenses, if allowed, and any pension schemes.

Your reply need not be long and it should set the right note of eager anticipation:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 2nd June, telling me that my application for the position of — has been successful.

I have noted carefully all the points you mention, and I am eagerly looking forward to starting work on Monday week.

Yours faithfully,

• REFERENCES •

Some employers attach a good deal of importance to references, while others prefer to rely more on their

personal judgement during interviews. Generally speaking, a reference can do little more than reassure a future employer that the applicant has the minimum qualifications of honesty and punctuality, and to serve as confirmation that he did in fact work in the company for the times stated in his application, and in the capacity claimed.

A reference giving these minimal details can usually be obtained from an employer on leaving or shortly afterwards. This is probably the best time to get one. If you wait till some time later, when perhaps the need may arise, the person you worked for may have moved on also, and the reference will be less personal and complete.

Here is the sort of letter you might write to a former employer asking for a reference:

Dear Mr. Hughes,

I should be very grateful if you would give me a reference covering the time for which I worked for you. I am now applying for another position and I have been asked to produce one.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

14

Be yourself

THERE IS A SINGULAR JOY IN WRITING personal letters. It is a shared act of self-expression. It has much of the joy of conversation without many of its disadvantages.

For one thing, you cannot be interrupted. You can express yourself, and in doing so experience the sense of creation and relief which accompany self-expression. Furthermore, you can take your own time. You can form your thoughts without the risk that your friend will become bored while you take time to express yourself perfectly, searching perhaps for just the right word or phrase.

A letter is a very private thing. You are not overheard. Some considerable effort is involved on the part of the writer, and this is all directed to one person. It is therefore a very flattering experience to receive a personal letter. Usually it comes as a surprise. The day begins as usual, then suddenly there is an envelope

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carrying a familiar handwriting, and you are no longer alone.

If it is a good letter, the writer will have penned it with you, the reader, constantly in mind. It may be the means of conveying news, or it may be simply the sharing of thoughts, prompted by a desire to keep in touch in spite of separation by distance.

The telephone is a miraculous invention, but it is no substitute for letter writing, except for the conveying of urgent news or the mere making of arrangements. Telephoning lacks both the intimacy of conversation and the graciousness of letter writing. It tends to be a hurried, mechanical form of social intercourse.

The letter is a remarkably cheap form of communication. With thin paper, you can convey so much for only a few pennies swiftly to any part of the world. Delivery next day in your own country, or a mere three days to cross the world, is common-place.

With so much to be said for letter writing, why then has it fallen into such decay as a means of communication?

Surely the answer is found in the one word—laziness! Letter writing demands personal effort. First you must find pen and paper, then somewhere comfortable to write. It must preferably be quiet, and this means turning off the television or radio.

It takes time. Even the swiftest writer will find his thoughts overtaking him. In a way, writing is like cooking: it takes so long to do, and is devoured so quickly. Yet cooking is here to stay—not merely as a function but as an art and a means of self-expression.

BE YOURSELF

Perhaps the decline in letter writing is only temporary. Perhaps it is merely an early casualty in the battle for faster, easier forms of communication, and is only injured and not mortally wounded.

Many sensible and sensitive people have expressed the passionate wish that this is so. For the retreat from the hurly-burly, which letter writing demands, is valuable. It gives a person time to get to know himself. It is similar to the time of meditation which has been recommended by philosophers and others throughout the ages.

And the act of self-expression which it allows without haste or interruption is equally valuable. For this enables the writer to get to know himself. He begins to *think* and so reveal his character and personality in a way that is not likely to be found in the routine and rush of everyday life.

Throughout this book you have been urged to pause before writing, to collect your thoughts and concentrate them on the person who will read your letter. This in itself is a first step to clear thinking and self-expression which has its counterpart in many teachings throughout the world.

Now let us look for a moment at the ways in which you and the people to whom you write can benefit most from the art of writing letters.

• WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED •

At the beginning of the book you read about style. You read that *anyone* could write, that any serious difficulties in expressing yourself on paper could be

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removed. By now you should have grasped the fundamentals of grammar and spelling, and any fears over punctuation and paragraphing should have vanished. You will have learned that the best style contains plenty of short sentences and the short words which you use every day. There is no need for complicated or rambling sentences and no place for obscure or flowery words.

True you need an extensive and varied vocabulary to achieve subtlety and effect, but this takes time. Meanwhile you can attain a lucid, individual style quickly and easily by relaxing and being yourself.

This of course is the secret: *be yourself*.

Write as you would speak. If you can remember to write almost as you speak, you will soon be writing good letters. Obviously to do this you must keep the person to whom you are writing clearly and constantly in mind. In conversation, either face to face or on the telephone, there is no need for this reminder: your brain is inter-acting with the other person's.

In letter writing, however, it is all one way. You tend to forget the reader and write in either stilted or pompous language.

It becomes too easy to write exclusively about yourself and what you have done, without enquiring what your correspondent has done or may be planning to do. If he were face to face, you wouldn't be guilty of such discourtesy, so why commit it in a letter?

Contrary to what you may suppose, this turning of

BE YOURSELF

your thoughts *outwards* instead of *inwards* instantly makes letter writing much easier.

Self-confidence. To be fully relaxed you need to be self-confident. By clearing your mind of extraneous thoughts and concentrating on the reader and those thoughts which matter, you stop being on the defensive and your tensions start to melt away.

You enter a small, private world, peopled only by you, the reader and your thoughts. Many novelists and other writers experience this sensation and some liken it to descending into a well. To be interrupted is to rise to the surface: to resume is to descend again.

If you are normally a shy person, letter writing should be a real joy to you. In this private world there is a complete release from the bondage of shyness. You can express yourself just as you please, without any of the inhibitions which plague you in the outside world. And if on reading through what you have written you are not happy with the way you have expressed yourself, you can re-write the offending thought—or strike it out altogether.

Wit and humour. With this sense of relaxed self-confidence, writing as you would speak, wit and humour are much more likely to sprinkle your pages. And how much better your letters will be if they do! Everyone likes to be amused, and luckily, there is nothing particularly difficult about being entertaining in your personal letters.

With your sights set on originality, with second-hand

clichés rigorously barred from anything you write, you should soon find your new, relaxed writing style containing your own brand of spontaneous wit and humour. It will be *your* special way of observing life, expressed frankly and in absolute confidence to the person to whom you are writing.

This charming and indeed necessary quality to your letter writing will come all the quicker if you are observant. Remember that it is essentially *your* way of looking at life that counts. This added quality has nothing to do with recounting other people's stories. It is entirely the product of a lively, relaxed mind in tune with the mind of another person.

The two wonderful ornaments to your letters—wit and humour—are quite different. Wit entertains the mind: humour makes you laugh. They both have their place in the well-written personal letter.

15

Formal private letters

SO FAR WE HAVE DISCUSSED PERSONAL LETTER writing in general terms. In the next two chapters we deal with them specifically.

In Chapter 14 we set down the broad principles for good style, and examined ways and means to help write friendly and discursive letters. Now we turn to those which have a definite aim. Bringing our studies to a highly practical level, let us look first at some typical letters which you may at some time have to write to business and professional people about your private affairs.

Your Bank Manager

Opening an account:

Dear Sir,

I should like to open a current account at your branch.

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Would you kindly let me know your charges and the facilities which you provide.

If you wish I should be pleased to call and see you.

Yours faithfully,

Asking for an overdraft:

Dear Sir,

I should like to know if you would allow me an overdraft on my current account of up to £500. As security I can deposit my life assurance policies with you.

Should you wish to see me, I can come along as soon as is convenient to you.

Yours faithfully,

Explaining an overdraft:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of — telling me that my account is overdrawn. I had not realised that this had happened, and I am afraid it is because of an unusually heavy crop of expenses at one time.

I shall be paying a cheque into my account within a few days. Meanwhile I shall not be drawing any more cheques.

Yours faithfully,

Advice on investing:

Dear Sir,

I wish to invest £500 from my current account and I should be grateful for the benefit of your advice.

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It is important that I should be able to realise the sum quickly if necessary, and I should prefer a high degree of security.

I have heard that the — Investment Trust is a good investment. Perhaps you would let me have your comments on it.

Yours faithfully,

Stopping payment of a cheque:

Dear Sir,

Will you please stop the payment of my cheque No. —, dated 3rd July, for £50, drawn in favour of T. H. Timmins.

Yours faithfully,

Your Solicitor

Making a will:

Dear Sir,

I wish to make a will, and I should like you to prepare a draft for me.

I wish to leave all my possessions to my wife, or if she should die at the same time as I, or soon after, to my children in trust.

I have a friend in mind who would act as trustee, but I understand that there are advantages in appointing my bank as trustees. This point I should like to discuss with you.

Perhaps we could arrange a time for me to come and see

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you when you have prepared the draft and I have had time to study it.

Yours faithfully,

Altering a will:

Dear Sir,

I wish to make an alteration to my will which you are holding for me. The alteration is to revoke the legacy to my nephew. If this can be changed by codicil, please draw up the document and send it to me for signature. If, however, the procedure is less simple, let me know and I will arrange to see you.

The amount of the legacy should be absorbed in the rest of my estate.

Yours faithfully,

Buying a house:

Dear Sir,

I wish to buy a house which I have inspected, and I should like you to act for me in the purchase. The house is 15, Oakley Crescent, London, N.8., and the owner is Mr. A. B. Jackson, now living there. His solicitors are Goodchild and Goodchild, 10 High Street, N.8. I have signed nothing yet, but I have agreed verbally to buy the house for £5,000.

I intend to seek a mortgage of £3,000 with the Planet Building Society.

As soon as possible, will you please prepare a document giving me an option on the property until contracts are exchanged.

Yours faithfully,

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To your Landlord

Giving notice:

Dear Sir,

Under the terms of my tenancy agreement, I am writing to give you one month's notice that I shall leave this flat on 30th June next.

Yours faithfully,

Deferring payment of rent:

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to have to ask you for time in which to make my payment for rent which is now due. I have recently been seriously ill, and this has meant a loss of earnings. Next week I shall be returning to work, and I am confident that within the next two months I shall make good the arrears.

Your co-operation and understanding at this time will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Requesting repairs:

Dear Sir,

I should be grateful if you would attend to the roof at this address. Wet patches appear on the ceiling after rain, and now the walls are becoming permanently damp.

This is clearly a menace to health and so I do ask you to arrange for repairs as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

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Asking to cancel a lease:

Dear Sir,

For business reasons I shall shortly be leaving the district. I am therefore writing to ask if you would agree to my cancelling the remainder of my lease. I should like to surrender it at once, and I shall, of course, leave the flat in good repair, under the terms of the lease. I suggest that I make you a cash payment of £— for disturbance of lease.

Yours faithfully,

Asking permission to sub-let:

Dear Sir,

I shall shortly be spending six months abroad and I should like to sub-let my flat while I am away. I see from my lease that I can do this only with your permission.

I have found a suitable tenant, Mr. — of — who is able to provide the usual satisfactory references. I sincerely hope that you have no objection to this arrangement, and I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

To an Estate Agent

Asking him to let a furnished house:

Dear Sir,

I should like to let my house furnished for six months beginning July 1st. I propose a rent of — guineas a week

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and I enclose full details of the house and an inventory of its contents.

Please let me know if you will put the house on your books and tell me what your terms will be.

Yours faithfully,

Making an offer for a flat:

Dear Sir,

I have inspected the flat at —, and I should like to know if you think the owner would agree to my taking it at a rent of — guineas a month. I should like the flat for a minimum of six months, and after that I suggest a month's notice on either side.

I can supply references on request.

Yours faithfully,

Making an offer for a house:

Dear Sir,

I have given more thought to the question of buying —, and I am now able to make an offer of £—. In doing so I am taking into consideration the state of repair of the house and the various improvements which will have to be made immediately after purchase if the property is to be both habitable and comfortable.

If your client agrees to my offer, please let me know within fourteen days of today's date. After that the offer must be considered withdrawn.

Yours faithfully,

LETTER WRITING

To Traders

Complaining of bad workmanship:

Dear Sir,

Today I received the furniture which I ordered from you, and I am writing at once to express my disappointment. The chairs are badly covered in a material I did not choose, and the workmanship in the table is nowhere near the standard which I saw at your showrooms.

Needless to say I cannot accept such poor workmanship, and so I shall be glad to hear from you without delay what you intend to do.

Yours faithfully,

Complaining of delay in delivery:

Dear Sir,

Nearly ten weeks ago I ordered a canteen of cutlery from you, and you promised delivery within a month. Three weeks ago I wrote to you enquiring about the delay and so far I have had nothing from you except a formal acknowledgment of my request.

Unless you can write to me by return promising immediate delivery, I regret that I must cancel my order. If the goods arrive after this, I shall have to refuse to accept them.

Yours faithfully,

Asking for an estimate:

Dear Sir,

I should like to have my house painted outside, back and

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front. Would you kindly inspect the house as soon as you are able and let me have an estimate of your lowest price for doing the work with best grade materials. At the same time, please let me know your estimated dates for starting and finishing.

Yours faithfully,

Complaining of overcharging:

Dear Sir,

I have today received your account for plumbing repairs recently carried out by you in my house, and I am writing at once to let you know that I do not consider the charges at all reasonable. Possibly a mistake has been made in your accounts department. If not I suggest that you call and see me on Saturday morning to explain the charges.

Yours faithfully,

Opening an account:

Dear Sirs,

I should like to open a credit account with you. Please let me know what references and other information you require.

Yours faithfully,

Asking for time to pay an account:

Dear Sir,

I am sorry that I have not been able to pay your account before now, but I have had some unusually heavy expenses

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all at the same time. I am sending you £— on account, and I ask you to accept my assurance that I shall pay the balance just as soon as I am able.

Yours faithfully,

Requesting acknowledgement of a payment:

Dear Sir,

I should like to bring to your notice the fact that I have not received any acknowledgement of the cheque for £—, which I sent to you on Thursday, 14th February, to be paid into my account.

I feel sure that your delay in sending me a receipt must be due to some clerical oversight, and I should be glad if you would rectify the situation as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

16

Informal private letters

NOW LET US LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES OF letters you may have to write to other private individuals. Some of these will be friendly; others less so. Whatever the subject of the letter and no matter to whom it is written, the same basic rules still apply: pause, form your thoughts, concentrate on the reader, then write directly and simply, keeping in mind all the while the effect you want to create.

First let us deal with the less friendly ones.

Complaining about a neighbour. Letters of complaint are never easy to write, especially if addressed to a neighbour. You still have to live near him after you have written, and you don't want to create a lasting resentment. At the same time you have to be forcible enough to bring about the action you desire.

One golden rule will help: never write while angry! Wait until your initial anger has cooled off,

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then compose a letter which will avoid his losing face. Usually this is best achieved by suggesting that he may not be aware of the nuisance he is creating.

Here are a couple of examples:

Dear Mr. —,

I do hope you won't think I am being unneighbourly, but I feel I must write to you about the noise of your television. I am quite sure you do not realise how far the sound carries, or you would have the volume much lower. In fact we can hear almost every word that is said. Luckily we both have the same tastes in music, though perhaps different ideas about bedtime!

I hope you won't take offence at my mentioning this. Please let me know at once if my set ever disturbs you.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Mr. —,

I am the person who lives in the flat below yours, and I am afraid I have to write about that bane of flat life—noise! Unfortunately this building was never intended for flat dwellers or the floors and ceilings would have been made more soundproof. As it is I can hear every footstep you take. During the day this doesn't worry me, but after eleven in the evening when I am usually in bed I do find that it keeps me awake.

I am quite sure that you are unaware of this and I have hesitated a long while before mentioning it. However, could you minimise the noise, possibly by wearing slippers or soft-soled shoes?

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I do hope that you won't think of me as unneighbourly in writing to you about this.

Yours sincerely,

If you should receive a letter of complaint, your first reaction will probably be one of indignation. Don't answer it then; wait until you have slept on it. Then you are sure to be reasonable—if the complaint is reasonable—and your answer will probably be along these lines:

Dear Mr. —,

I am so sorry that you have had to write to me about the noise from my television set. Of course I had no idea it carried so far or I would have kept the volume much lower.

I have told the children not to have it so loud, and I will try to remember to keep it quieter in the late evening. Please don't hesitate to let me know if it ever worries you again.

Yours sincerely,

Borrowed money. Money matters between friends and acquaintances are a ready source of friction. Letters on the subject need to be written with tact and consideration. If you found it necessary to ask a friend for a loan, your letter might read like this:

Dear Paul,

I have just had a run of exceptionally bad luck, and now I am frankly short of money. Several bills simply must be paid and I need about £— to meet them. Could you possibly lend me this amount?

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I am working hard and I am sure I could repay you within a couple of months. Can I count on you to help me?

Sincerely,

A reply, granting the loan, would be easy to write. A refusal would present some difficulty in most cases. There is no need to write a long letter, however, and the reply could read:

Dear Bill,

I wish I could help you. You know that I would without hesitation if it were possible, but you have asked me at a time when my own expenses have been unusually heavy. As a result I just don't have the money available. I am so sorry to have to refuse.

Sincerely,

Suppose the money has been lent, but the promised repayment hasn't materialised. A reminder could be along these lines:

Dear Bill,

Could you possibly let me have the £— which I lent you a few months ago? It is now my turn to have some pressing bills to pay, and I do really need the money.

I do hope that things have improved for you.

Sincerely,

If this doesn't produce the desired result, however, you will have to be more forceful, as in the following letter.

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Dear Bill,

I am sorry to have to write again about the £— which you owe me. I helped you out on a clear understanding that the money would be repaid within two months. I have given you at least a month's grace, but now I must insist on having the money repaid.

Please let me have it before the end of the week.

Sincerely,

Now to pleasanter topics!

Invitations. There are two ways in which you can word an invitation: formally or informally. Nowadays formal invitations are strictly reserved for life's great occasions such as weddings or important functions.

The wording of a formal invitation is as follows:

Mr. and Mrs. John Brown request the pleasure of the company of Mr. and Mrs. David Jones on Saturday, May 7th, at eight p.m.

Black tie. Dancing.

R.S.V.P.

Park Lodge, St. James, S.W. 1

The wording of a formal invitation is always in the third person. The reply should follow the same style:

Mr. and Mrs. David Jones accept with pleasure Mr. and Mrs. John Brown's kind invitation for May 7th at eight p.m.

22 Lansdowne Place, N.W. 1

Or, if declining:

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Mr. and Mrs. David Jones very much regret that a previous engagement will prevent their having the pleasure of being present on May 7th at eight p.m.

22 Lansdowne Place, N.W.1

An informal invitation, however, will read like an ordinary letter. You can vary the style to create a feeling of formality or informality as you wish. Here are some examples:

Dear Mrs. Clark,

Would Mr. Clark and you like to come to a small party we have arranged for Saturday, March 20th, at nine? We do hope you will both be able to come.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Dear Antony,

Marion and I would be so pleased if Anne and you could come over and have dinner with us next Wednesday, the ninth. It seems such a long time since we saw you. Perhaps you would phone and say how soon you can make it.

Yours ever,

Dear Sarah,

I am having a small flat-warming party on the eleventh. Would you be able to come? The evening would be quite incomplete without you, and I am sure you will know nearly everyone. Try to get along about eight.

Sincerely,

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Accepting or declining an informal invitation should be in the same style as the invitation.

Accepting:

Dear Janet,

I shall be delighted to come over on Saturday. It will be wonderful to see you again, and I am very much looking forward to meeting some of your friends.

Sincerely,

Dear Angus,

Thank you for your very kind invitation to dinner on Wednesday week. Sue and I will be delighted to come. Will eight o'clock be too late? We have to make some arrangements about the children, and I think that is the earliest time we could get to you.

Yours sincerely,

Declining:

Dear Mr. Parkhurst,

I am so sorry, but I shall have to decline your very kind invitation to spend the week-end with you. I had already made arrangements which involve other people and I am afraid I cannot very well change them.

Perhaps there will be another week-end when we shall both be free.

Yours sincerely,

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Dear Harry,

I would have loved to come over to dinner with you on Saturday, but I shall be out of town for the week-end. You can imagine how disappointed I am, especially when we have been trying to arrange something for so long.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

'Thank You' letters. Here's where you must avoid well-worn phrases if your letters are to have the ring of sincerity. There is the temptation to over-enthuse if you don't feel strongly about what you have to say. Resist it. Try to restrict yourself to writing what you really feel.

Perhaps these examples will help you.

Dear Aunt Margaret,

Thank you for the delightful cigarette case. It was an excellent choice and already several of my friends have admired it. What a thoughtful idea to have my initials engraved on it!

I thoroughly enjoyed my birthday and saw that new play at the Queen's. I think you would appreciate it.

Again, thank you. I hope to see you soon.

With love,

Dear Susan and Kenneth,

Thank you so much for the wonderful week-end. Pamela and I enjoyed ourselves more than we have done for a long, long time. We feel so rested and refreshed that it is hard to

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believe that we were in the country for only two days.

We feel quite guilty for not having helped Susan more with the chores, but then your brand of hospitality is unqualified.

How would you like to spend a week-end with us this autumn? We should love you to see all that we have done to the place since you helped us move in. Some of Pamela's ideas are very daring! How would the first week-end in October suit you?

Again, thank you both for all you did for us

Yours ever,

Dear Mr. Moore,

I do want to thank you for your great kindness in playing for us at our annual concert last night.

I am sure the warmth of the applause and the number of encores that you kindly gave will have convinced you that your playing was really appreciated.

My Committee will be putting their thanks officially on record, but in the meantime I wanted to write to you myself to express my gratitude.

Yours sincerely,

Congratulations. A timely letter of congratulations, full of warmth and admiration, is a true gesture of friendship. With your thoughts well and truly on the reader you should find this kind of letter quite easy to write.

Perhaps these examples will help you:

LETTER WRITING

Dear John,

I can't tell you how happy I am to hear that you have passed your exam. I know just how hard you worked and a little about the misgivings you felt, especially towards the end. This is a very real achievement which you richly deserve, and I only wish I were with you to shake you by the hand and share some of your happiness in person.

I'm sure you will have the same success with the next one.

Yours ever,

My dear Margaret,

I was thrilled to learn about your new appointment and I hope I am among the early ones to congratulate you. It sounds as though this is exactly the kind of work you are suited for, and what you have been wanting. Knowing you as I do, I am sure you will make an unqualified success of it.

Sincerely,

Dear Michael,

A very happy birthday to you! How I wish I were spending it with you so that we could repeat last year's celebration. I hope you've accidentally let your colleagues know about it so that they are nice to you all day!

When are you coming back to see us all?

Enjoy yourself,

Yours ever,

My dear Sally,

I am overjoyed to hear of your engagement to John. Knowing how sublimely happy you are together, I've been hoping so much that this would happen.

INFORMAL

I believe you are to be married quite soon; perhaps you would send me your wedding list so that I can give you something you would really like.

Love,

P.S. Did you manage to get the diamond ring you always wanted?

Condolences. Of all letters, these can be the most difficult. If you are writing to express your sympathy on a bereavement, for example, there is the knowledge that you may be causing distress simply by bringing the subject to mind again.

As with other personal letters, sincerity is the key. Don't write something that you cannot feel, and scrupulously avoid euphemism and mundanity. Needless to say, letters of this kind are best kept short; trivial or light-hearted subjects do not readily mix with sadness in a letter.

Here are some examples of letters to serve as a guide; firstly a short letter after learning of a death:

Dear Mrs. Powers,

I was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of your sister. Please accept my deepest sympathy. If there is anything at all that I can do, don't hesitate to get in touch with me at once.

Yours very sincerely,

At such a time a person needs something positive to think about and so the letter should if possible contain

LETTER WRITING

a genuine offer of help. In this case you can write a longer letter:

Dear Sarah,

We send you our heartfelt sympathy and our love. Just now you must be feeling very much alone, and so John and I suggest you come over and stay with us for a while. You know that we should love to have you.

John and I counted Peter as one of our closest friends. We shall miss him terribly. John shared many confidences with him, and so we know just how much he appreciated all that you did for him, especially towards the end. No one could have done more.

Do let us know that you will come and stay.

With our love,

Perhaps you will have to write a letter to someone who has become ill. As far as you can, strike a cheerful note, and again be positive. If someone is ill, he is probably feeling sorry for himself. He doesn't need to be reminded he is ill, but he does want to be told there are plenty of reasons for getting better quickly. Here is an example of an encouraging, sympathetic letter.

My dear Alec,

This is a letter that needs no answer: it is simply to say get well soon. When you feel better, perhaps I can come and see you. Meanwhile I want you to know that I am thinking of you and missing you very much.

I hear that you are in excellent hands under Dr. ———.

INFORMAL

The part you have to play is to do just what you're told—for once—and to keep quiet and not worry.

When you are out and better, we shall have to make up for the time you have missed.

With warmest wishes,

As ever,

It must be remembered that most of the examples given in this chapter are very much shorter than actual letters would be. They are intended merely to indicate the style of letter, not to provide a fictional letter in full.

There are of course many, many specific subjects calling for special treatment other than those given in this chapter. Those given however, are the subjects, which seem to create most difficulty, and it is hoped that the theory and general advice in the earlier chapters, coupled with the more practical and specific help offered in the last two chapters, will encourage you to write more and very much better letters.

Letter writing is an important and neglected means of communication. It has much to commend it, not the least being that, once the barrier to free expression is down, it rewards the writer just as richly as the reader.

17

Forms of address

THIS CHAPTER LISTS SOME OF THE PEOPLE holding titles or important positions in the community, to whom you may have to write at some time.

Forms of address to these people have been relaxed in recent years and it is possible that the recommendations given here may be rather less formal than some of the followers of convention would wish. It is believed, however, that the forms of address which are given are both accurate and contemporary.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

Royalty

The Queen

ENVELOPE:

Her Majesty the Queen,

SOCIAL:

Dear and Honoured Madam,

.....

Your Majesty's most humble and obedient subject,

OFFICIAL:

Madam,

May it please your Majesty . . .

.....

I have the honour to remain,

Your Majesty's most humble and obedient subject,

The Queen Mother

ENVELOPE:

Her Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother,

Then as for the Queen.

Other Members of the Royal Family

ENVELOPE:

His Royal Highness the Duke of —, or

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of —.

LETTER WRITING

SOCIAL:

*Dear Sir,
Dear Madam,*

.....

*I am, Your Royal Highness,
Yours faithfully, (or Yours truly or Yours sincerely)*

OFFICIAL:

*Sir,
Madam,*

.....

*I remain, Sir (or Madam),
Your Royal Highness' most obedient servant,*

Dukes and Duchesses, etc.

A Duke

ENVELOPE:

*The Duke of —, K.G.,
(or K.T.)*

SOCIAL:

*Dear Duke of —, or
My Dear Duke,*

.....

*I am, Your Grace,
Yours faithfully, (or Yours truly or Yours sincerely)*

FORMS OF ADDRESS

OFFICIAL:

*My dear Lord Duke,
Will your Grace . . .*

.....

*I have the honour to be,
Your Grace's most obedient servant,*

A Duchess

ENVELOPE:

The Duchess of —,

SOCIAL:

*Dear Duchess of —, or
Dear Duchess,*

.....

*I am, Your Grace,
Yours faithfully, (or Yours truly or Yours sincerely)*

OFFICIAL:

*Madam,
Will Your Grace . . .*

.....

*I have the honour to be,
Your Grace's obedient servant,*

A Marquess

ENVELOPE:

The Marquess of —,

LETTER WRITING

SOCIAL:

Dear Lord —, or
Dear —, (when a personal friend)

.....

I am, Lord —,
Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

My Lord Marquess,

.....

I have the honour to be, my Lord Marquess,
Your obedient servant,

A Marchioness

ENVELOPE:

The Marchioness of —,

SOCIAL:

Dear Lady —,

.....

I am, Lady —,
Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

Madam,

.....

I have the honour to remain, Madam,
Your Ladyship's obedient servant,

An Earl

ENVELOPE:

The Earl of —,

FORMS OF ADDRESS

SOCIAL:

As for a Marquess.

OFFICIAL:

My Lord,

.....

I have the honour to remain, My Lord,
Your Lordship's obedient servant,

A Countess

ENVELOPE:

The Countess of—,

SOCIAL:

As for a Marchioness.

OFFICIAL:

As for a Marchioness.

A Viscount

ENVELOPE:

The Viscount —,

SOCIAL:

Dear Lord —, or
Dear —, (when a personal friend)

.....

I am,
Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

As for an Earl.

LETTER WRITING

A Viscountess

ENVELOPE:

The Viscountess —,

SOCIAL:

Dear Lady —,

.....

I am,

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

As for a Marchioness.

A Baron

ENVELOPE:

The Lord —,

SOCIAL:

As for a Viscount.

OFFICIAL:

As for an Earl.

A Baroness

ENVELOPE:

The Lady —,

SOCIAL:

As for a Viscountess.

OFFICIAL:

As for a Countess.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

Note: For a duke or duchess the envelope in official correspondence may carry the prefix *His (Her) Grace*. For a marquess or marchioness onward the envelope in official correspondence may carry the prefix *The Right Hon.*

A Baronet

ENVELOPE:

Sir John —, Bt.,

(If an M.P. Sir John —, Bt., M.P.)

SOCIAL:

Dear Sir John —, or

Dear Sir John,

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

Sir,

.....

I have the honour to remain, Sir,

Your humble and obedient servant,

The wife of a Baronet

ENVELOPE:

Lady —, (surname)

SOCIAL:

Dear Lady — (surname)

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

LETTER WRITING

OFFICIAL:

Madam,

.....

*I have the honour to remain,
Your Ladyship's humble and obedient servant,*

Dame of the Order of the British Empire

ENVELOPE:

Dame Mary —, D.B.E.

SOCIAL:

*Dear Dame Mary —, or
Dear Dame Mary,*

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

*Madam, or
Dear Madam,*

.....

*I have the honour to remain,
Your humble and obedient servant,*

A Knight

ENVELOPE:

Sir John —, K.C.B., (or K.C.M.G. or K.C.S.I.)

SOCIAL:

As for a Baronet.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

OFFICIAL:

Sir, (or Dear Sir,)

.....

*I have the honour to remain, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,*

The Wife of a Knight

ENVELOPE:

Lady —, (surname)

SOCIAL:

Dear Lady —, (surname)

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

*Madam or
Dear Madam,*

.....

*I have the honour to remain,
Your Ladyship's most obedient servant,*

The Clergy

A Cardinal (Roman Catholic)

ENVELOPE:

His Eminence, Cardinal —,

LETTER WRITING

SOCIAL:

*My dear Lord, or
My dear Lord Cardinal,*

.....

*I have the honour to be, My Lord Cardinal,
Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)*

OFFICIAL:

My Lord Cardinal,

.....

*I have the honour to be, My Lord Cardinal,
Your Eminence's humble and devoted servant,*

An Archbishop (Anglican)

ENVELOPE:

His Grace the Lord Archbishop of —,

SOCIAL:

*My dear Lord, or
My Dear Lord Archbishop,*

.....

*I have the honour to be, my Lord Archbishop,
Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)*

OFFICIAL:

*My Lord Archbishop,
May it please your Grace . . .*

.....

*I have the honour to be, my Lord Archbishop,
Your Grace's most devoted and obedient servant,*

FORMS OF ADDRESS

A Bishop

ENVELOPE:

The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of —,

SOCIAL:

*My dear Lord, or
Dear Bishop,*

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

My Lord,

.....

*I have the honour to remain,
Your Lordship's obedient servant,*

A Dean

ENVELOPE:

The Very Rev. the Dean of —,

SOCIAL:

*Dear and Rev. Sir, or
Dear Dean,*

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

Very Rev. Sir,

.....

*I have the honour to be, Very Rev. Sir,
Your most obedient servant,*

LETTER WRITING

An Archdeacon

ENVELOPE:

*The Ven. Archdeacon of —, or
The Ven. Archdeacon —, (surname)*

SOCIAL:

Dear Archdeacon,

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

Venerable Sir,

.....

*I am, Venerable Sir,
Yours faithfully,*

A Canon

ENVELOPE:

The Rev. Canon —, (surname)

SOCIAL:

Dear Canon —, (surname)

.....

Yours truly, (or Yours sincerely)

OFFICIAL:

Reverend Sir,

.....

*I am, Reverend Sir,
Yours faithfully,*

FORMS OF ADDRESS

Rector, Vicar or Curate

ENVELOPE:

The Reverend John —,

SOCIAL:

Dear Mr. —, (surname)

.....

Yours sincerely, (or Yours truly)

OFFICIAL:

Reverend Sir, or

Dear Sir,

.....

*I am, Reverend Sir,
Yours faithfully,*

The Bar

The Lord Chancellor

ENVELOPE:

*The Right Hon. the Lord Chancellor (followed by
title and name)*

SOCIAL:

Dear Lord —,

.....

Yours sincerely,

LETTER WRITING

OFFICIAL:

My Lord,

.....

*I have the honour to remain,
Your Lordship's humble and obedient servant,*

The Lord Chief Justice

ENVELOPE:

The Right Hon. Lord Chief Justice of England,

OFFICIAL:

As for the Lord Chancellor.

The Master of the Rolls

ENVELOPE:

The Right Hon. the Master of the Rolls,

OFFICIAL:

Sir,

The Lord Justice of Appeal

ENVELOPE:

The Right Hon. the Lord Justice —, (surname)

OFFICIAL:

*My Lord Justice, or
Sir,*

FORMS OF ADDRESS

The Attorney General

ENVELOPE:

*The Right Hon. (name and title) Attorney General,
Q.C.*

OFFICIAL:

Sir,

The Solicitor General

ENVELOPE:

*The Right Hon. (name and title) Solicitor General,
Q.C.*

A Queen's Counsel

ENVELOPE:

John — Esq., Q.C.

OFFICIAL:

*Sir, or
Dear Sir,*

A Justice of the High Court

ENVELOPE:

The Hon. (name and title, if any)

OFFICIAL:

*Sir, or
Dear Sir,*

LETTER WRITING

A County Court Judge

ENVELOPE:

His Honour Judge —, (surname)

OFFICIAL:

*Sir, or
Dear Sir,*

Medicine

A practising Surgeon

ENVELOPE:

J. —, Esq., M.R.C.S.,

SOCIAL:

Dear Mr. —,

OFFICIAL:

Dear Sir,

A Doctor of Medicine

ENVELOPE:

Dr. J. —,

SOCIAL:

Dear Dr. —,

OFFICIAL:

Dear Sir,

FORMS OF ADDRESS

Government

The Prime Minister

ENVELOPE:

The Right Hon. the Prime Minister

OFFICIAL:

Sir,

A British Ambassador Overseas

ENVELOPE:

*His Excellency the Right Hon. (name and title),
Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary.*

OFFICIAL:

Sir, (or My Lord, according to rank)

A British Consul Overseas

ENVELOPE:

*John —, Esq.,
Her Britannic Majesty's Consul,*

OFFICIAL:

*Sir, or
Dear Sir,*

A Member of Parliament

ENVELOPE

J. —, Esq., M.P.

LETTER WRITING

OFFICIAL:

Dear Sir,

A Governor-General

ENVELOPE:

*His Excellency (name and title),
Governor General of —*

• PART TWO •

OFFICIAL:

*Sir, (or My Lord, according to rank)
Will your Excellency kindly allow . . .*

A Lord Mayor

ENVELOPE:

*The Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of (city),
(or The Lord Mayor of (city))*

OFFICIAL:

My Lord,

A Mayor

ENVELOPE:

*The Right Worshipful the Mayor of (city)
The Worshipful the Mayor of (borough),*

OFFICIAL:

Sir,

18

Examples of letters

IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK YOU WILL FIND examples of letters written for particular occasions and situations. It is not intended that you should copy these examples word for word. They are given in order to demonstrate fully the teachings in the first part of the book: the importance of keeping the reader constantly in mind; a free, interesting and readable style, varied according to the situation: good grammar, punctuation and paragraphing.

By reading through these letters, and using them for reference purposes when a special situation arises, it should be possible to write a good letter more quickly and easily during the period of learning the art of letter writing. Later when you have regained or mastered the art, you should not find it necessary to refer to this part of the book except perhaps occasionally to refresh your memory or refurnish your mind with ideas

LETTER WRITING

• CONGRATULATIONS •

Congratulations on passing an examination:

Dear Patricia,

I hope I am one of the first to congratulate you on passing your examination. Knowing how hard and long you worked for it, I think I understand better than most just what passing with such an excellent mark means to you.

I am positive that this is only the first of a whole string of successes. You won't discard me when you are horribly rich and famous, will you?

No doubt you will be celebrating with the others, but please save a little celebration for when we are next together.

Again, my heartfelt congratulations to you. I am truly proud to be your friend.

Ever yours,

Freda

Replying to congratulations:

Dear Freda,

Yes, your letter was an early congratulation—the very first I opened. Honestly, Freda, I can hardly believe it! All that work, then the ghastly exam, the post mortems and then the agony of those months of waiting. To think that I

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have actually passed. I don't think I would have done it if you hadn't helped, nagged, inspired and bullied me.

Will you still know me when I am haggard with years of studying—a lonely intellectual while you stay gay and beautiful, gliding through life with such charm and ease?

Let's meet as soon as we can. It was sweet of you to write so quickly.

Yours,

Patricia

Congratulating a man on his engagement:

Dear Steve,

I have just heard of your engagement to Kathleen and I am writing at once to congratulate you. You are indeed a lucky chap! It is wonderful news, though of course not a complete surprise.

Naturally I'm curious to know how long it is likely to be before you get married, so suppose you come over for a drink and tell me something of your plans. Just let me know when you can come, and I'll make a point of being in.

Yours ever,

Joe

Replying to congratulations:

Dear Joe,

It was good of you to write so soon with your congratulations. Yes, I should very much like to come over and

LETTER WRITING

*have a drink with you. How about next Friday?
I'll be along about eight-thirty if that is all right.*

*Kathleen and I intend to marry quite soon, but I'll tell
you more when I see you.*

Again thanks for writing.

Yours ever,

Steve

Congratulating a woman on her engagement:

Dear Phyllis,

*The news of your engagement to Tom has just reached
me, and I am losing no time at all in writing to say how
delighted I am to hear of it. I am sure you will both be
happy. Everyone likes Tom, and you are ideally suited
to each other.*

*Won't you come over and tell me all about it? Make it
any evening next week; I'm sure to be in.*

I am so happy for you.

With love,

Sybil

Replying to congratulations:

Dear Sybil,

*Thank you so very much for sending me your good wishes
on my engagement to Tom. It is a wonderful time of one's
life and I am determined to enjoy every minute of it. You*

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*must meet him again soon—I know he is looking forward
to seeing you.*

*I should love to come and see you. I shall be along on
Tuesday evening unless you say 'no'.*

Affectionately,

Phyllis

Congratulations on the birth of a son:

Dear Alice,

*Peter and I were thrilled to learn of the birth of your
son, and this letter brings you our heartiest congratulations
and best wishes to you both. We hope you are all
flourishing, and that Edwin is not taking too much of the
credit!*

*We shall want to come and see you as soon as you feel
like having visitors.*

Sincerely,

June

• CONDOLENCES •

Condolence on the death of a husband:

Dear Pamela,

*I feel bound to write to you at this time and express my
deep sympathy to you in your loss. It is difficult to find the
right words to express what is in my heart. Everyone who*

LETTER WRITING

knew Jack admired him. Many of us envied the great bond there was between you.

You will need courage to see you through the time ahead, but I know you have this quality and it will not fail you now.

We shall all miss Jack. Be sure that this tragic event does not mean we shall see less of you. When you feel up to it, do please come over and see us.

As ever,

Marie

Condolence on the loss of employment:

Dear Sam,

I have just heard the sad news about your leaving Houston and Company. I know that this was totally unexpected because it was only a short time ago that you were discussing your plans with them.

I can imagine just how you feel, but I know you well enough to have complete confidence in your ability to meet the situation with courage and resourcefulness.

If you feel that a good listener would be helpful at this time, please consider me for that role. You know that if I can help you in any way at all, I shall gladly do so.

Yours ever,

Donald

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Reply to condolences:

Dear Donald,

Thank you for writing me such an encouraging letter. It was just what I needed at this depressing time.

At the moment I am too shocked to make any firm plans for the future. I need a little while to regain my self-confidence, for, as you realise, my departure from Houston and Co. was a complete surprise.

Yes, I would benefit greatly by having you to talk to. Could you come round on Tuesday evening for a chat? I would welcome your valuable advice.

Yours ever,

Sam

Condolence on a financial loss:

Dear Allen,

I have just heard of your unfortunate loss and I feel bound to write and express my sincere sympathy. Knowing you as I do, I feel sure that you will fight your way out of this situation, and that it is only a matter of time before you are on your feet again.

The perseverance and courage which enabled you to gain your previous position will stand you in good stead just now. I am certain that your friends will help you in every way possible,

With sympathy and every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Roland

LETTER WRITING

Reply to condolences:

Dear Roland,

I am deeply grateful for your timely letter. It has indeed helped me to face up to my position and has sustained me enormously.

I have already started on the slow, uphill battle to regain my position. My pride is hurt but not mortally wounded.

With gratitude,

Yours ever,

Allen

• REQUESTS FOR HELP •

Request for help re employment:

Dear Mr. Hodgson,

Earlier this month my employers made a radical change of policy and as a result I have been declared redundant. They have stressed that this is no reflection on my work, but is due entirely to streamlining of operations and the introduction of accounting machinery.

I am writing to ask if there is a likelihood of a vacancy in your company which you think I could fill. I do remember that, when my father was alive, you said I should call on you if at any time I needed help. This is such a time.

I would not want you to offer me an opportunity merely out of kindness; it would have to be an appointment where I

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could repay you in my ability to do a real job of work for you.

I have already left my work and so I should be free to start at any time.

With kindest regards,

Yours very truly,

Peter Adams

Favourable reply:

Dear Peter,

I am very glad indeed that you wrote to me. I can imagine just how you feel, and I hasten to give you some news which I feel sure will do you good.

It so happens that our company is opening up a new branch in the West next month and we are at present recruiting staff. I am almost sure that we have just the vacancy for you, and I suggest you come along and talk about it with me as soon as you like. How about ten o'clock at my office on Tuesday next, March 18th?

I should mention that this would mean your moving to the new district, but the company would of course help you with the expense.

Rest assured that I am not making this offer just out of kindness. I am naturally eager to help you because of my friendship with your father and because I have a very high regard for your abilities.

I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Hodgson

LETTER WRITING

Request to help another re employment:

Dear Peter,

I am trying to do something to help Bill Tomkins, who used to be employed at Neilson's Ltd. Bill, who lives just out of town, has had a bad time lately, and unless something can be done for him soon, I am afraid his health may suffer permanently.

You may remember that his wife, Sarah, died earlier this year. Since then Bill has become absent-minded and has slowed down considerably. Neilson's kept him on for some time—but it soon became apparent that he was no longer the useful skilled worker he once was. Bill's pride was hurt and one day last month he gave in his notice.

For several weeks now he has been out of work and he is getting into a bad state but he would probably accept a position as watchman or caretaker if offered it. Is it at all possible that you could do this just now?

Bill is very honest, reliable and conscientious. I am sure he would do a good job for you or anyone, provided he was not hurried or given a responsibility beyond his powers.

If I could help him directly I would do so. As it is, I can only make enquiries among a few good citizens such as yourself in the hope that some suitable job can be found.

If you can help, do please get in touch with me at once, and if you like I will arrange for Bill to see whoever you nominate.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Harold Armstrong

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Reply regretting inability to help:

Dear Harold,

Since I received your letter about Bill Tomkins I have been making enquiries to see if we can help. I have spoken to the managers of all my departments but I am afraid there is no job vacant, or likely to become vacant, which we could give him. We are in fact overstaffed at the moment, as a number of our older employees have had to be put on to less exacting work, and we couldn't take on an extra man.

It is extremely good of you to take an interest in Bill Tomkins and I only wish I could help. During the next few days I shall be meeting some colleagues in other companies and I shall make a point of mentioning him to them. If anything comes of this, you will hear either from me or direct from them.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Peter Hallsworth

Request for help in making a will:

My dear Jeremy,

For some time I have realised that I should go through the business of making a will. I have never felt fitter in my life, and I have no intention of saying good-bye to you all for a very long time, but apparently these formalities have to be observed!

I want to know if you would do me the great favour of

LETTER WRITING

being my Executor. My estate is small and my affairs in order, so I can promise you that it would be wound up in the shortest possible time.

I can think of no one I trust more than you, nor any person I would prefer for this small task. I sincerely hope you will do me this kindness.

If you agree, I shall instruct my solicitors to go ahead with my will and include you as my Executor.

I sincerely hope that you keep well and that things are prosperous for you at work.

Ever yours,
Alan

Reply declining to act as Executor:

My dear Alan,

It was good to hear from you again and to learn that you are so well. I think you are very sensible to think about making a will, and I am sure you will feel the better for having done so. I took the trouble to make mine a year ago, and I can assure you it is quite painless!

Alan, I wish I could say 'yes' to your request for me to be your Executor. I feel greatly honoured, and if I felt I were the right man for this honour I would accept without hesitation.

However, I now learn that the company intends to send me abroad for an indefinite period and that I shall be kept on the move, spending a year or less in one place before going on to another. As you know, with my wanderlust, this is just the sort of break I have been wanting, but it really does

EXAMPLES

not make me a suitable person for the role of Executor. I do hope you will understand, but I must say 'no'.

Have you ever thought of appointing your bank as Executor? Permanence is an important qualification. Let us meet soon.

As ever,

Jeremy

Request to help a son:

Dear Martin,

At the end of this term David will be leaving school, and I am doing my best to help him and guide him in choosing his career.

For some time now he has talked of nothing else but a career in publishing, and, he has shown a great deal of initiative in learning as much as he can about the business.

I am wondering if you could spare a little time to talk to him and give him the benefit of your knowledge? If he could possibly be introduced to one or two people in your organisation who would be willing to open his eyes to the realities of publishing as well, you know that Martha and I would be very grateful to you. We are concerned that he should choose something for which he is suited in every way.

If his enthusiasm persists, and you feel that he is suited to publishing—and has above average ability—do you think there is any chance of his joining you?

He has always shown a great admiration for you and I know that the prospect of working for you would be the realisation of an important ambition of his. Naturally, it

LETTER WRITING

would be a source of immense satisfaction to Martha and myself.

I mention this now because, if there is a possibility of this happening, I feel that it is best that you know his ambition when, as I sincerely hope, you see him.

Needless to say, I watch the continued growth of your organisation with utmost interest. It is a very great credit to you.

Martha sends her kindest regards.

Sincerely,

Jonathan

Reply agreeing to help:

Dear Jonathan,

Yes, I shall be delighted to see David and help him all I can. I may not be able to spend very long with him myself because of pressure of work, but I shall arrange to pass him on to some of my executives who will show him round, ask him a few questions and answer any questions he likes to put to them.

It is some time since I saw young David, but if he has continued to grow up in the way he was doing, I should say that he would be just the kind of young man we should like to have in the organisation.

However, as you are obviously aware, we must be right for him, just as he must be right for us. I feel sure that by the time he has left here he will have made up his mind one way or the other—and so shall we.

Would you ask him to come to my office at 10 a.m. next

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Thursday, June 23rd. I shall write to you the same day, and I suggest that, if it is decided that he joins us, Martha and you should come and have dinner with me the following Tuesday. Then we can talk about his future in earnest.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

Martin

Request to help another while sick:

My dear Alice,

Today I learned that my cousin Jennie Blake has been taken to hospital with acute appendicitis. Jennie is living near you in Peterborough and I am wondering if you could possibly spare the time to visit her.

If I could possibly get away to make the journey and see her myself, I would gladly do so. However, there is simply no chance of this, as Bill has 'flu, and the children are just getting over it.

She is a sweet person and I know she would really appreciate seeing you. I expect you can imagine how it feels when everyone except yourself has visitors!

She is in the Memorial Hospital, Nightingale Ward. The operation is today, and if all goes well I should imagine that she would be fit enough to see you soon after you receive this letter.

Funnily enough, I always wanted you to meet Jennie for she is my favourite cousin and has been very good to me, but I never thought it would be under these circumstances. If you are able to visit her, do give her my love and best

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wishes for a quick recovery, and of course let me know if there is anything she might want that I could send her.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

Margaret

Reply agreeing to help:

My dear Margaret,

As soon as I received your letter I rang the hospital to find out when I would be able to visit Jennie. The operation today was perfectly successful and if all continues to go well, she will be allowed to see me tomorrow. So as soon as I have been, I will write to let you know how she is.

Believe me, this is no duty, but a very pleasant outing for me. I am looking forward to seeing her, and if she takes to me, I shall see her as often as possible while she is in hospital.

I understand that the surgeon is very well thought of, and everyone in the town speaks highly of the staff at the hospital—an efficient, kind and very friendly team.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Alice

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• INVITATIONS •

Invitation to a picnic:

Dear Gillian,

Next Sunday Pamela and I are planning to take the children out for a picnic and we wondered whether you would like to join us. Now that Eric has got over his boisterous period you needn't worry about there being enough room in the car, and we could pick you up at your door.

Would nine o'clock be too early? We thought that if we made an early start we could spend the whole day at the sea. We are making no firm plans about where to go, but if you like the idea we might head towards South Bay—where we had that glorious day about two years ago.

Pamela has told me that you haven't been getting out at all lately. You are far too young and interesting to become a recluse, so do please say you will come on Sunday. It would make the day complete for us.

Don't worry about food. It is no trouble for us to pack one extra helping in the picnic basket.

Sincerely,

Jim

Reply accepting an invitation:

Dear Jim,

The picnic sounds a wonderful idea and I am writing

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at once to say how delighted I should be to come. You are quite right—I haven't been out nearly as much as I should, and this kindness that you and Pamela are showing will probably jerk me out of my lethargy.

It seems ages since I saw the sea. I do remember South Bay so well and I should love to go there again. However, I could go anywhere with you all and be completely happy.

I shall be ready at nine o'clock, but I do insist on one thing; that you let me bring a cake. That is the least I can contribute.

Give my love to the children. I am looking forward so much to seeing you all again.

Ever yours,

Gillian

Invitation to stay for a week-end:

Dear Preston,

I have suddenly realised that I haven't see you for far too long. Would you remedy this by coming out here for the week-end. Your company would do me good, and the country air would do you good. Does this make sense to you? I hope it does.

Please write back by return and say you can come. I suggest you catch a train after work on Friday evening and stay until the Sunday evening. Just let me know what time you will arrive and I shall be at the station to meet you.

It will be good to see you again.

All the best,

Patrick

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Invitation to share a holiday:

Dear Sarah,

For some weeks now I have been trying to think what I should do for my holidays this year. Bookings have to be made so much earlier nowadays or the best accommodation is all taken.

I thought I should like to go abroad and be sure of sunshine and warmth, especially after the disappointing weather we had last year.

How would you like to come with me? Of course you may have already made plans, but if not I am sure we should have an enjoyable time together. Does the idea of a holiday abroad appeal to you? I don't believe you have been before, so it would be a real change for you, and needless to say I would enjoy showing you the fun and mysteries of this kind of holiday.

Suppose we meet for lunch soon and discuss when and where we might go. Even if you have already made arrangements, it is still time we met, so please let me know when you can manage.

Ever yours,

June

Declining:

Dear June,

You have no idea how pleased I was to hear from you after all this time. Yes, let's meet for lunch just as soon

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as possible. I suggest next Thursday at The Hay Wain, about quarter to one.

It was sweet of you to think of me as a companion for your holiday, and I would have loved to come with you. However I have already agreed to make up a party on the Broads and I can't very well change my plans now without letting the others down.

I do sincerely hope you will decide on something you would really like to do. Perhaps we can talk about a few ideas when we meet. I certainly agree we should think about spending our holidays together next year.

Until Thursday,

Yours,

Sarah

• LETTERS ABOUT CHILDREN •

Absence from school:

Dear Mr. Tomlinson,

I am sorry that I have had to keep Eric away from school for the last three days. He has had a bad cough and I thought it wise to keep him indoors during this cold weather.

Would you please excuse him from games for the rest of the week.

Yours sincerely,

Elsie Mitford

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Absence from school:

Dear Miss Strong,

On Monday I am planning to visit Coventry to see the cathedral, and I should very much like to take Andrew with me. As you know he is extremely interested in architecture, and I feel that the visit would benefit him greatly.

I should be most grateful if you would excuse him from school for that day so that he may have this opportunity. He has promised that, if you grant this, he will work at home to make up for the lessons missed.

Yours sincerely,

Paula Midhoop

Absence from school:

Dear Mr. Hewitt,

I regret that my daughter, Edith, spent last Sunday with a friend who has now developed chicken-pox. My doctor tells me that she should stay away from school for the quarantine period.

She feels quite well and is anxious to keep up her school work. If you would be good enough to let me have some of her books and an outline of the work in progress while she is away, I should be pleased to collect them.

Yours truly,

Edna Taylor

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Enquiry about a school:

Dear Sir,

I have read your advertisement in the Daily —, and I should be grateful if you would send me full details and a prospectus.

My son Arthur is fifteen and we are anxious that he should receive special coaching. He particularly needs help in mathematics. Would you let me know what you would be able to do about this.

He is a keen tennis player and has recently become an enthusiastic swimmer. Please let me know what facilities you have for these and other sports.

Yours faithfully,

Robert Spill

Apologising for a child's behaviour:

Dear Miss Humphries,

I was very distressed to learn of Paul's bad behaviour. I am so sorry that you have found it necessary to write to me about it.

Normally he is an obedient, well-mannered boy and I find it difficult to understand why he seems to have changed suddenly. I realise that you have to administer punishment in such cases, but would you also be good enough to talk with him, and try to understand just why he should start behaving in this way.

I certainly don't want to interfere, but if as a result you

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feel that I should visit the school and talk to him, I should be only too glad to come up.

I have written to him telling him of my disappointment, and I hope that he will not have any more lapses.

Yours truly,

Vera Cardew

Apologising for damage:

Dear Mrs. Hunt,

I am writing to apologise for the behaviour of my son, Tommy. I understand that yesterday afternoon he kicked a ball into your garden and broke a window.

He told me about it at once and has agreed to pay for the damage out of his pocket money. I am very sorry indeed that this has happened, and I have told him to be more careful in future.

Boys are apt to become too exuberant when playing and to forget that neighbours' peace should not be disturbed.

When you have had the window repaired, please send the bill to me and I shall take care of it.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Goodchin

Request for help re son's progress:

Dear John,

Marion and I are rather concerned about Philip's progress

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at school this term and we were wondering whether you could possibly visit the school on our behalf.

If either of us could make the trip we would do so at once, but Marion just can't leave Susan, and I shall be working at least a six-day week until the forthcoming conference is behind me.

I know it is asking a lot of you, especially as you have so much to do yourself, but we really would appreciate your help just now if you can possibly spare the time.

Philip's letters to us have been getting shorter and more vague all this term, and his marks in class have been going downhill progressively. I have written to Mr. Jenkins, his housemaster, and he has seen him on a number of occasions. The boy seems well, though subdued, according to him, but he does suspect that the lad has some worry on his mind which he is not prepared to discuss.

Philip is very fond of you, John, and I feel that if there is anything he should reveal, you are the one who can achieve it. In fact, I think he would probably talk more freely to you than he would to his mother or me.

I have hesitated for some time before troubling you with this request. Naturally I am most anxious about him, and I do hope you are able to see him. However, if you find it impossible to get away, I shall quite understand.

Marion sends her love to you both.

Yours sincerely,

Frank

P.S. Better not let the boy think I asked you. Just say you were passing and thought you would drop in.

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Reply agreeing to help:

Dear Frank,

Of course I shall be delighted to call at the school and have a few words with young Philip. I have already spoken to Mr. Jenkins, who sounded a reasonable and understanding chap, and he will see that Philip is around on Sunday afternoon.

You can be sure that I will do all I can to find out if there is anything wrong. I wouldn't worry too much if I were you. Youngsters have their off periods and he may just be going through a phase.

Mr. Jenkins assured me that he is in good health.

Just as soon as I have seen him, I shall write you a full report.

When you have finished your present busy period, why don't you and Marion come up and spend a week-end with us. Bring Susan with you—we'd love to see you all.

Sincerely,

John

Complaining of the behaviour of a neighbour's adolescent son:

Dear Mr. Pershore,

I regret that I have to write to you on a rather serious matter. You are no doubt aware that your son, Joseph, and my daughter, Angela, have been friendly for some time. At first my wife and I were pleased about this. We had a high

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regard for Joseph, and Angela seemed to be the happier for having him as a close friend.

Lately however the situation has changed. They have been seeing more and more of each other, but instead of Angela becoming happier, she has grown secretive and morose. All attempts to gain her confidence and learn what is the matter have failed: all we know is that it is connected with her friendship with Joseph.

From all this my wife and I can only deduce that he is behaving dishonourably towards her. Would you, perhaps, try to learn from him what has happened between them so that as parents we may together help these young people to regain their happiness.

For the next few days I have arranged a number of engagements to prevent their meeting. If you can act quickly it may be possible to solve this problem without my having to go to the formality of forbidding their seeing each other. I am anxious to avoid this because my experience has been that to prevent young people from doing something only makes them all the more determined to do it!

I anxiously await your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Harold Smythe

Reply apologising for the behaviour of an adolescent son:

Dear Mr. Smythe,

I am grateful to you for writing what must have been a

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difficult and painful letter, and for bringing to my notice a state of affairs which I did not know about.

Soon after receiving your letter I talked to Joseph, and I am thankful to say that he was unexpectedly frank with me. I do not think it is necessary to go into details in this letter, but it does appear that I owe you an apology for his behaviour towards your daughter, Angela. At first he was extremely fond of her, but later his affection waned. However, by this time their physical intimacy had become closer and he was reluctant to end the friendship. I have pointed out the dishonourable nature of such a relationship, especially since it does seem that Angela still has strong feelings for him, and he has readily accepted the moral viewpoint.

He truly believes that he should stop seeing Angela, and I think it would be best if you explained to her as gently as possible what has happened, so that it is not necessary for them to meet again.

I feel sure that with your help and understanding she will come to accept the situation and in time develop fresh interests and friendships.

Again let me say how grateful I am to you for writing to me, and how sorry I am that my son should have caused you this distress.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Pershore

Apology for a child's behaviour:

Dear Mrs. Heal,

I understand that my son, Lance, quarrelled with your

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son, Timothy, this afternoon, and that when they parted Timothy was in bad shape. I feel I should express my regrets to you about this incident because it is not the first time it has happened, and also because Lance is the older and bigger boy.

He is now very concerned because Timothy has apparently told him that if there was another fight, he would be forbidden to play with Lance. I do hope that you do not take this point of view. They are really the best of friends and most of the time they get on exceedingly well together. It just happens that they are both exuberant and volatile, so that from time to time there are bound to be quarrels.

I have spoken to Lance very severely, mentioning his superior age and size, and he is very contrite indeed. He would like to call round to apologise to both you and Timothy. However before doing so he has asked me to write to you as he feels nervous about calling on you after the incident.

Please accept my own apologies for what has happened, and do please assure me that you will agree to our sons continuing to play together.

Yours sincerely,

Lilian Cartwright

Unfavourable reply:

Dear Mrs. Cartwright,

Thank you indeed for writing to me about yesterday's unfortunate quarrel. Had you not done so I would have written myself.

Timothy came home in a shocking state. His nose was

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bleeding, his knee badly grazed, his clothes torn and dirty, and with one shoe missing. It has not yet been found, and I should be grateful if you would try to find out from your son where it is.

I certainly did warn Timothy that if there were any more quarrels with your son I would forbid their playing together, and as I believe in keeping promises and threats, I must insist that they do not see each other any more.

I might add that Timothy is quite happy about this, as after yesterday's fight he has no desire to play with your son again.

It would be an excellent idea if you used this incident as a lesson for your son. Exuberance is one thing and is excusable, but bullying and violence to this degree are not.

I am extremely sorry that this has occurred and I do hope that it will not cause us to become bad neighbours. Please try to understand how I feel.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Heal

• LETTERS TO CHILDREN •

About a son's bad behaviour:

My dearest Tony,

Your mother and I were very distressed to hear from Mr. Forsythe about your bad behaviour last week. It sounded so unlike you that for a while we wondered whether he had made a mistake. Whatever prompted you to act this

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way? We find it difficult to understand, especially in view of your excellent record at the school so far.

We should like you to write to us with an explanation and to reassure us that it won't happen again. If there is any problem on your mind which may have some bearing on your behaviour, then do tell us about it. We want to be able to help you, but at the same time we have to be firm with you. Let us be frank with each other and then it will be easier all round.

These years at school are very precious to you if you are to carve out a career for yourself later in life. Don't waste them. School is a training ground for later life and if you behave unsatisfactorily now there is a very real danger that the habit will persist. Look upon Mr. Forsythe and ourselves as people anxious to help you—people who will not be so readily available sometime in the future.

So write to us, my dear Tony, and make up your mind not to let such a thing happen again.

Your affectionate father,

Congratulations on progress:

My dear Anthony,

I doubt if you can imagine how delighted your father and I are about your progress at school. Not only have you had an excellent mid-term report, but Mr. Bruce has himself written to us to tell us how pleased he is with your work and your general behaviour.

Your father and I realise that it takes time to settle into a new school, and that is why we were not over-anxious

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about your earlier disappointments. We felt sure you had the strength of character to persevere and win success, and now our high hopes of you are being fully realised.

You have plenty of hard work ahead of you and there will of course be setbacks and disappointments. You should be able to take most of these in your stride, but if at any time things seem to be getting on top of you again, remember that Mr. Bruce and your father and I are always ready and anxious to help you in any way that we can.

Hearty congratulations, Anthony dear, from both of us. We are so very proud of you.

Father sends his dearest love.

Your loving mother

Unsatisfactory work:

Dearest Kenneth,

Mother and I enjoyed reading your last letter, and we are proud to think that you have been chosen to represent the school at swimming. You have made terrific progress considering that you learned to swim only a short time ago, and it is a great credit to you.

We are rather concerned, however, about your school work which seems to have suffered recently. According to your mid-term report you are well down the class in contrast to the good place you had last term. What is wrong, Kenneth? Until a few weeks ago you seemed so keen, and now you appear to have lost interest.

If you can show your willingness to work well, you know that Mother and I will do everything in our power to assist

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you through university or in any other way that will help you with your career. We both have great faith in you and we feel sure that you have a first-class brain. In fact you have everything a boy needs to take him right to the top—all you have to do at present is show that you have the will to work and succeed.

The staff at the school are eager to help you just as long as you demonstrate your determination to work. This school is a wonderful start for you in life. Don't throw the chance away by wasting your time or letting your interest flag.

If you have any problem—if you are worried about anything at all, write to either of us and I promise you we shall do all we can to understand it and to help you.

We are so happy about your swimming news. Now let us have some good news on the other front!

With all our love,
Your loving father

• MONEY MATTERS •

Asking for a loan:

Dear Mr. Hutton,

I have hesitated a long time before writing this letter, and after I have posted it I shall probably regret having done so.

You may perhaps have heard that I recently lost my job. At the time I thought I would have no difficulty in finding

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another, but this has not turned out to be the case. Everywhere I go I hear the same story: 'Sorry, but we had a younger man in mind.'

I am still trying to find work, and I am still confident that it is only a question of time before I am successful. Unfortunately, however, I am running short of money. As you can appreciate, I must keep up a good standard of appearance and also keep myself fit, but this is becoming increasingly difficult.

Could you possibly advance me a small sum of money to tide me over the next few weeks? I assure you it will be put entirely towards this particular operation, and I shall repay it as soon as I possibly can, once I start work.

Yours very truly,
Jack Stevens

Reply declining to help:

Dear Jack,

I was sorry to learn that you are having difficulty in finding work. Since I received your letter I have given it a great deal of consideration, and, just as you found difficulty in writing to me, so do I find it hard to reply.

After much thought I have decided against advancing you money and I should like to explain why, hoping that a few words of advice will probably help you more.

You had no need to leave your last position. I know the circumstances of your departure: in the last few months you had become slack and had come to lean on others who, out of kindness, did much of your work for you. Your

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greatest need is self-discipline and the will to work to your utmost. If you lean on others now, you will never learn these vital qualities.

I have no wish to be unkind. I have a very high regard for your ability when you use it, and I am sure that by encouraging you to be self-reliant now I am helping to bring that day nearer.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Martin Hutton

Request for repayment of a loan:

Dear Bernard,

When you wrote to me asking for help to get you out of financial difficulties, I readily agreed to lend you £50 for a period of six months. It is well over six months since I sent you the money, and so far I have not heard from you.

During the last few weeks I have been subjected to the pressures of financial commitments which I had not anticipated. I was reluctant to mention this fact, but I should like you to understand my true position in this matter.

I had hoped that you would repay the amount without my having to remind you. I do not wish to be unreasonable, but I also have my financial obligations and I must ask you to meet yours.

I trust that you have solved your problems and that things are better again with you.

Yours sincerely,

Eric

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Reply asking for more time to repay a loan:

Dear Eric,

I am indeed sorry that it was necessary for you to write to me about non-payment of my loan within the agreed time.

Believe me, I had intended to meet my obligations, and in fact, but for a setback a few weeks ago, I would have been able to do so. At the end of this month I am expecting to receive the fruits of a great deal of hard work in my efforts to regain my solvency, and, if you would be patient just this little while longer, I think I can promise to repay my loan in full.

I am more grateful than I can say for the help you have given me, and the last thing I want is any discord between us as a result of your kindness.

Yours very sincerely,

Bernard

• MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS •

Offer of help to a friend:

My dear Derek,

Now at last I have found out why you have not been keeping in touch with me. Why on earth didn't you tell me you had encountered a spot of bad luck? Not having heard from you, I naturally assumed that all was going

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swimmingly with you, whereas all the time you were in real trouble. You should realise that friendship ought to exist precisely for times like these and you should have got in touch with me at once.

Now Derek, I want you to do me a favour. Lately I have managed to build up quite a tidy reserve in my bank account and it is lying there practically rotting. I want you to be good enough to let me do something really useful with it. To be exact I want you to make use of £100 of it at once and to return it one day when you have finished with it. There are no strings attached and there is no set date for returning it.

To save time I'm sending a cheque for the amount with this letter and I want you to lose no time in cashing it.

This however is not all. I'm sure there must be some other way in which I can help you, even if it is only as a listener. Believe me, I will gladly do anything I can.

So write to me as soon as you can, tell me just how things stand with you and let me know what further use I can be.

Ever yours,

Tom

Reply accepting help:

My dear Tom,

It is difficult for me to tell you just how much your letter meant to me. It arrived just when things seemed blackest and in a way it was as though you were right beside me. Since then I have begun to feel things will get better and it has given me renewed hope.

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I should like to accept your generous offer. I promise that I will start repaying you as soon as I can.

I should very much like to see you. Could you possibly come over at the week-end? Then I would be able to tell you about everything that has happened, and perhaps you would be able to give me some advice about my plans for the future. If you could come on the Saturday afternoon and stay over until Sunday, we should have time for a long talk.

I hope you can understand why I have not written to you before. I do hope you can come.

Again thanking you,

Sincerely,

Derek

Offer of help re career:

Dear Gwen,

Now that young Edgar has passed his exams I imagine he will soon be thinking of leaving school. Do you have a career in mind for him? Please don't think I want to interfere at all if you have made plans and he knows what he is going to do. It will be wonderful news for me to hear this is so.

On the other hand, if you need any advice or some practical help, do please feel free to call on me.

I know that Douglas would have liked me to help if possible.

If you think Edgar would talk freely with me, I shall be very happy to spend some time with him and try to get

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his views and assess his abilities. It is so important that he chooses a career that suits him, rather than makes for the first job offered, or picks one for ready money at the beginning.

If you think he would like the kind of work I am doing—and he is the kind of lad who would make good at it—I should be delighted to give him a start in my own firm. But we can talk about that later.

I do hope that you are keeping well. I shall enjoy seeing you again after so long. Sylvia sends her love.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

George

Reply declining help:

Dear George,

How kind of you to write to me about Edgar and to make such a generous offer of your time and influence.

I do appreciate your offer of help, and I should accept it at once if I felt that I could use it.

However, Edgar has made up his mind what he wants to do, and not all the advice in the world will make him change it. Fortunately I am entirely happy with his choice, as I believe he has both the ability and the conviction that this is exactly what he wants. He has decided to become an architect, and he leaves school at the end of this term to start his studies. After his indecision, it is a joy to see him determined and working so well.

Of course I should be delighted to see you and Sylvia just

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the same. Why don't you both come over for tea on Sunday? Edgar is almost sure to be home then, and you could see for yourself why I have suddenly become such a conventionally proud mother.

Sincerely,

Gwen

Suggestion to share a holiday:

Dear Bill,

I am determined to go abroad this year and so make sure of good weather and a deep tan! How would you like to join me?

Think of it: relaxing and swimming on sun-drenched beaches, sipping wine under the trees, trying out exotic dishes and enjoying all the strange sights and sounds of another country.

Have I sold the idea to you?

I can take any two weeks in September. I'm hoping that you can get away at that time too. If you can—and you like the idea—we ought to meet as soon as possible, decide where to go, and then book up without delay.

There may be a possibility of joining a chartered flight at reduced rates, through our trainee organization. But I am afraid we have left it a little late to be able to count on that.

Write and say 'yes' by return, and fix a time to meet. I'm free almost any evening.

Yours,

Edgar

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Reply agreeing to share holiday:

Dear Edgar,

You must be a mind reader. I had been thinking about my holiday all day, trying to decide what to do, and not wanting to do it alone. Then when I arrived home, still in a quandary, your letter was waiting for me.

Yes, I like the sound of the sort of holiday you describe, and I should be delighted to share it with you.

I have one or two places in mind, but I will keep them to myself until we can meet and discuss the venture. Unless I hear from you I'll be along on Wednesday evening about eight.

Until then,

Yours,

Bill

Thanks for a week-end:

My dear Freda,

I am writing without a moment's delay after arriving home to thank you for the delightful week-end you gave me. It was wonderful to see you after so long, and I was enchanted with your little cottage.

How quickly the time went! We seemed to do nothing but eat, talk and wash up. But that isn't being fair to you. I enjoyed our walks together and the chance to see some of your beautiful countryside.

The journey back was long and rather uncomfortable,

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and of course I was not a little sad. However, I insist that you come and stay with me in town just as soon as you can get away. Just write with a week or two as warning and say you are coming.

Again, thank you for all you did.

Ever yours,

Angela

Asking a friend to be a godfather:

My dear George,

Now that Michael is an energetic six months old, we are making important plans about his future. One of these is the question of appointing godparents, and that is why I am writing to you now.

Eleanor and I would dearly like you to be his godfather. Nowadays this is not usually regarded as very onerous duty, and we hope that it will not involve you in any great responsibility. However, it would be a source of great comfort to us both if we knew that you were there to help and guide him if we were not.

The christening will be at St Peter's on Sunday August 11th, and, whether you accept our request or not, we do hope you will be present. However, it would make us both so happy if you will agree to becoming his godfather. Perhaps you would come over and see us one evening beforehand when we could talk it over.

Eleanor sends her love and best wishes.

Ever yours,

Sidney

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Reply agreeing to becoming a godfather:

My dear Sidney,

I was delighted to hear from you and of course I will accept your invitation to become Michael's godfather. Believe me, I regard this as one of the most important honours bestowed on me, and I am determined that it shall be more than a formality.

Whilst naturally I hope with all my heart that the need may never arise, you can be sure that I will do all I can to ensure his welfare if I am wanted.

I think it is an excellent idea if we meet and talk about him. Please suggest an evening next week. I shall look forward eagerly to seeing him—and of course yourselves.

Yours ever,

George

Sending a gift:

Dear Rosemary,

I do hope you will like the small gift I am sending with this letter. Somehow I feel sure that it is exactly "you", and I only wish that I could bring it to you in person and see the expression on your face when you open it.

People with all the money in the world have no idea at all how much more difficult it is to give presents when cost has to be taken into consideration. But then they also miss the joy of thinking hard in the beginning and searching all over town with someone special in mind.

EXAMPLES

This gift comes to you with all my love. I hope you have at least some of the pleasure in receiving it that I have in giving it.

Yours,

Bill

Thanks for a gift:

Dear Bill,

You are kind and clever and simply wonderful! Honestly, I had no idea at all that you could choose a present that was so absolutely right in every way.

I do hope that this sudden praise from me doesn't sound as if I have been over-critical or underestimating you up to now. It is just that so few men have the patience, taste and understanding to do what you have done, and I am as surprised as I am overwhelmed.

I shall treasure it always.

As ever,

Rosemary

Sending a gift:

Dear Mary,

Please accept this small gift with my love and best wishes. I hope you enjoy receiving it at least half as much as I have enjoyed choosing it for you.

Affectionately,

Jim

LETTER WRITING

Thanks for gift:

Dear Jim,

You are sweet to think of such a delightful present. It was quite unexpected and all the more appreciated for that. Thank you, not only for giving me something I shall always cherish, but also for giving so much thought to choosing it.

Ever yours,
Mary

• LETTERS TO THE LANDLORD •

Request for larger premises:

Dear Mr. James,

I should like to move to a larger flat as soon as possible, and so I am writing to ask if you would let me know if you happen to have one to let, or expect to have one in the near future.

I have in mind a self-contained flat with two rooms and, if possible, a separate kitchen.

I shall be enquiring elsewhere as well, but would prefer to move into premises owned by you if possible, taking into account the satisfactory relationship which has existed between us to date.

Yours truly,
Harold White

EXAMPLES

Complaint about a leaking roof:

Dear Mr. Allen,

Would you kindly ask your agent to call and inspect the condition of my roof. During wet weather and for some time afterwards, water drips through the ceiling of my upstairs rooms, and I regret to say the situation is becoming worse.

You may recall that I did mention this matter to you some time ago when it was less serious, but nothing has been done.

Yours truly,
Marjorie Franklin

Enquiries about accommodation for a friend:

Dear Mr. Smythe,

A friend whom I have known for many years is shortly coming to London, and I am doing my best to find suitable accommodation for him. Knowing that you have a number of properties in this district, and taking into consideration your fairness in our business dealings, I am writing to enquire whether you have a flat vacant, or shortly becoming vacant, which would suit him.

He is hoping to find a small, unfurnished two-room flat, self-contained if possible.

I should be most grateful if you would do your best for him. Possibly you may know of something suitable owned by an acquaintance.

Yours sincerely,
Edward Kripps

LETTER WRITING

• LETTERS TO TRADESMEN •

Complaint re non-delivery:

J. Mossman & Co. Ltd.,
7 St. James Drive,
London, S.W.10

Dear Sirs,

Three weeks ago I ordered a lawn mower from you on the understanding that you would deliver it within a week. I have not yet received it, and this delay is a considerable nuisance to me. My lawn is growing rapidly with the warm weather and I have no means of cutting it.

Would you please make arrangements to deliver it before the week-end. If this is not possible, then I must ask you to lend me a lawnmower free of charge until mine arrives, and to supply it also before the week-end.

If you are unable to meet these requests, then I must reluctantly ask you to cancel my order and return my deposit.

Yours truly,

A. J. Hurst

Request to open an account:

The Accountant,
Holden's Household Stores Ltd.,
233 High Street,
Harville.

Dear Sir,

Would you please arrange for me to open an account

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with you as soon as possible. I shall be pleased to supply references on request.

Yours faithfully,

C. W. Thrush

Request for time to pay an account:

The Accountant,
H. Dewhurst & Co. Ltd.,
43 Lower Street,
Marywell.

Dear Sir,

Would you kindly give me extended credit in connection with your account for £7 9s. 3d. received this week. I realise that this account is now due, but I should appreciate having until the end of the month to meet it.

Yours faithfully,

G. Parsons

Request for a representative to call:

The Manager,
Lightfoot Cleaning Co. Ltd.,
Swan Lane,
Crowhurst.

Dear Sir,

Would you kindly arrange for a representative to call and discuss without obligation the cleaning of my carpets. It is important that the work should be completed before

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the end of the month, so please let me know whether this is possible when you reply.

I shall be in between 10 a.m. and midday on Wednesday and Thursday this week.

*Yours faithfully,
(Mrs.) S. Johnson*